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THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH.

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By CHARLES READE.

A NEW EDITION.

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00091448

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

It is the London Season: come into the country! It is hot, and dusty, and muddy here; and this opening of all the drains, which is to bridle all the disorders by and by, poisons us dead meanwhile, O Board of Health! Come into the country!

In Oxfordshire, about two miles from the Thames, and on the skirts of the beech forest that lies between Wallingford and Henley, stands an irregular farm-house; it looks like two houses forced to pass for one; for one part of it is all gables, and tile, and chimney corners, and antiquity; the other is square, slated, and of the newest cut outside and in. The whole occupies one entire side of its own farm-yard, being separated from the straw only by a small rubicon of gravel and a green railing; though at its back, out of the general view, is a pretty garden.

In this farm-house and its neighbourhood the events of my humble story passed a very few years ago.

Mrs. Mayfield, proprietor of the farm, had built the new part of the house for herself, though she did little more than sleep in it. In the antique part lived her

cousin, old farmer Hathorn, with his wife and his son Robert. Hathorn was himself proprietor of a little land two miles off, but farmed Mrs. Mayfield's acres upon some friendly agreement, which they contrived to understand, but few else could, least of all a shrewd lawyer.

The truth is, the inmates, like the house, were a little behind their age: they had no relations that were not contained within these four walls, and the feeling and tie of blood was very strong between them all.

The Hathorns had one son, Robert, a character; he was silent, and passed with some for sulky; but he was not sulky, only reserved and thoughtful; he was, perhaps, a little more devoid of all levity than becomes a young man. He had great force and weight of character; you might see that in his brow and his steady manner free from flourishes. With the Hathorns lived Mr. Casenower, a retired London tradesman. This gentleman had been bought out of a London firm for his scientific way of viewing things: they had lost such lots of money by it.

He had come to the Hathorns for a month, and had now been with them a year, with no intention on either side of parting yet awhile. This good accord did not prevent a perpetual strife of opinions between Casenower and old Hathorn. Casenower, the science-bitten, had read all the books chemists wrote on agriculture, and permitted himself to believe every word. Hathorn read nothing on agriculture but the sheep,

the soil, the markets, and the clouds, &c., and sometimes read them wrong, but not so very often.

Rose Mayfield was a young widow, fresh, free, high spirited, and jovial; she was fond of company, and its life and soul wherever she was. She loved flirtation, and she loved work; and when she could not combine them she would take them by turns; she would leave the farm every now and then, go to a friend at Oxford, Reading, or Abingdon, and flirt like wild-fire for a fortnight; then she would return to the farm, and men boys horses and work would seem to go more lively before she had been back an hour.

Mrs. Mayfield was a grazier. Though she abandoned her arable land to her cousin's care, she divided with him her grass acres, and bred cattle, and churned butter, and made cheeses, and showed a working arm bare, till dinner-time (one o'clock) six days in the week.

This little farm-house then held a healthy, happy party; but one was not quite content. Parents are matrimonial schemers; they cannot help it; it's no use talking. Old Hathorn wanted Rose Mayfield to marry his son Robert, and so make all sure. The farmer was too wise to be always tormenting the pair to come together, but he secretly worked towards that end without being seen through by them.

Their ages were much the same; and finer specimens of rustic stature and beauty in either sex were not to be seen for miles. But their dispositions were so

different that when, upon a kind word or a civility passing between them, old Hathorn used to look at Mrs. Hathorn, Mrs. Hathorn used to shake her head, as much as to say, 'May be, but I doubt it.'

One thing the farmer built on was this; that though Mrs. Mayfield was a coquette, none of her beaus followed her to the farm. 'She won't have them here,' argued Hathorn, 'and that shows she has a respect for Robert at bottom.'

The good farmer's security was shaken by a little circumstance. Bix farm, that lay but a mile from our ground, was to let, and, in course of time, was taken by a stranger from Berkshire. Coming into a farm is a business of several months; but the new tenant, a gay, dashing young fellow, came one day to look over his new farm; and, to Hathorn's surprise, called on him, and enquired for Mrs. Mayfield. At sight of the new-comer, that lady coloured up to the eyes, and introduced him to her cousin as Mr. Hickman. The name, coupled with her manner, struck Hathorn, but he said nothing to Rose. He asked his wife who this Hickman was. 'He is a stranger to me,' was the reply, 'ask Rose; I hear he was her beau out Abingdon way.'

Here was a new feature. The good farmer became very uneasy; but country-folks have plenty of tact. He said little—he only warned Robert, who did not seem dismayed by the intelligence, and held himself on his guard.

That same evening the whole family party were seated together towards sundown, in Hathorn's dining-room—the farmer smoking a clay pipe, Mrs. Hathorn sewing, Mrs. Mayfield going in and out making business; but Robert was painfully reading some old deeds he had got from Mrs. Mayfield the week before. This had been the young man's occupation for several evenings, and Mrs. Mayfield had shrugged her shoulders at him and his deeds more than once.

On the present occasion, finding the room silent and reposeful, a state of things she abhorred, she said to Mrs. Hathorn, in a confidential whisper, so bell-like, that they all heard it, as she meant them, 'Has your Robert any thoughts of turning lawyer at present?'

The question was put so demurely that the old people smiled and did not answer, but looked towards Robert to answer. The said Robert smiled, and went on studying the parchment.

'He doesn't make us much the wiser, though; does he?' continued Mrs. Mayfield. 'Silence!' cried the tormentor, the next moment, 'he is going to say something. He is only waiting till the sun goes down.'

'He is only waiting till he has got something to say,' replied Robert, in his quiet way.

'Ah!' was the reply; 'that is a trick you have got. I say, Jane, if I was to wait for that, what would become of the house?'

'It would not be so gay as it is, I dare say, Rose.'

'And that would be a pity, you know. Well, Bob, when do you look to have something to say? to-morrow night—if the weather holds?'

'I think I shall have something to say as soon as I have read this through.' He examined the last leaf—then laid it down. 'I have something to say.'

Mrs. Hathorn laid down her work.

'Cousin Mayfield,' said Robert, 'what do you think of Drayton Farm?'

Cousin Mayfield, who had been all expectation, burst into a fit of laughter that rang through the room like a little peal of bells. Mrs. Hathorn looked vexed, and Robert coloured for a moment; but he resumed coolly: 'Why, it is two hundred acres, mostly good soil, and it marches with your up-hill land. Squire Phillips, that has just got it, counts it the cream of his estate.'

'And what have I to do with Squire Phillips and Drayton,'

'Why, this, Rose. I think Drayton belongs to you.'

'Nonsense—is the boy mad? Why, Squire Phillips got it along with Hurley, and Norton, and all the Lydalls' farms. Of course they are all mine by right of blood, if every one had their own; but they were all willed away from us fifty years ago. Who doesn't know that? No: Squire Phillips is rooted there too fast for us to take him up.'

'It does not belong to Squire Phillips,' was the cool reply.

'To whom, then?'

'To you, Rose; or, if not to you, to father yonder —but, unless I am much mistaken, it belongs to you. I am no great discourser,' continued Robert; "so I have written it down to the best of my ability here. I wish you would look at this paper, and you might read it over to father and mother, if you will be so good: I am going my rounds'—and out strolled Mr. Robert, to see that every cow was foddered, and every pig had his share of the trough.

Mrs. Mayfield took Robert's paper, and read what he had written—some score of little dry sentences, each of them a link in a chain of fact—and this was the general result:—Fifty years ago Mrs. Mayfield's father's father had broken off all connection with his son, and driven him out of his house and disinherited him, and adopted in his stead the father of Squire Phillips. The disinherited, being supplied with money by his mother, had got on in the world, and consoled himself for the loss of his father's farms by buying one or two of his own. He died before his father, and bequeathed all he possessed to his daughter Rose. At last the old fellow died at an immense age, and under his will Squire Phillips took all his little estates: but here came in Robert's discovery. Of those four little estates, one had come into the old fellow's hands from his wife's father, and through his wife, and a strict settlement, drawn so long ago that all except the old fellow who meant to cheat it had forgotten it, secured the

Drayton estate, after his parents' death, to Rose Mayfield's father, who by his will had unconsciously transferred it to Rose.

This, which looks clear, had been patiently disentangled from a mass of idle words by Robert Hathorn, and the family began to fall gradually into his opinion. The result was, Mrs. Mayfield went to law with Squire Phillips, and the old farmer's hopes revived; for he thought, and with reason, that all this must be another link between Robert and Rose—and so the months glided on. The fate of Drayton was soon to be tried at the Assizes. Mr. Hickman came over now and then, preparatory to settling on Bix. Mrs. Mayfield made no secret that she found him 'very good company'—that was her phrase—and he courted her openly. Another month brought the great event of the agricultural year, 'the harvest.' This part of Oxfordshire can seldom get in its harvest without the assistance of some strange hands, and Robert agreed with three Irishmen and two Hampshire lads the afternoon before the wheat harvest. 'With these and our own people we shall do well enough, father,' said he.

Just before the sun set Mrs. Hathorn was seated outside her own door with her work, when two people came through the farm-yard to speak to her; a young woman and a very old man. The former stood a little in the rear; and the old man came up to Mrs. Hathorn, and, taking off his hat, begged for employment in the fields.

'Our number is made up, old man,' was the answer.

The old man's head drooped; but he found courage to say, 'One more or less won't matter much to you, and it is the bread of life to us.'

'Poor old man,' said Mrs. Hathorn, 'you are too old for harvest work, I doubt.'

'No such thing, dame,' said the old man testily.

'What is it, mother?' cried Robert from the barn.

'An old man and his daughter come for harvest work. They beg hard for it, Robert.'

'Give them their supper, mother, and let them go.'

'I will, Robert; no doubt the poor things are hungry and weary and all:' and she put down her work to go to the kitchen, but the old man stopped her.

'We are here for work, not for charity,' said he; 'and won't take anything we don't earn.'

Mrs. Hathorn looked surprised, and a little affronted. The girl stepped nearer.

'No need to speak so sharp, grandfather,' said she, in a clear, cold, but winning voice; 'charity is not so common. We thank you, dame. He is an old soldier, and prouder than becomes the like of us. Good even, and good luck to your harvest!'

They turned to go.

'Stop, girl!' said Mrs. Hathorn. 'Robert,' cried she, 'I wish you would come here.'

Robert put on his coat and came up.

'It is an old soldier, Robert; and they seem decent folk, the pair of them.'

'An old soldier?' said Robert, looking with some interest at the old man, who, though stiff in the joints, was very erect.

'Ay! young man,' said the other boldly, 'when I was your age I fought for the land; and now, you see, I must not work upon it!'

Robert looked at his mother.

'Come, Robert,' said she, 'we may all live to be old, if it pleases God.'

'Well,' said Robert, 'it seems hard to refuse an old soldier; but he is very old, and the young woman looks delicate; I am sure I don't know how to bargain with them.'

'Count our two sickles as one, sir,' said the girl calmly.

'So be it,' said Robert; 'any way, we will give you a trial:' and he returned to his work. And Corporal Patrick, for that was the old soldier's name, no longer refused the homely supper that was offered him, since he could work it out in the morning.

The next morning at six o'clock the men and women were all in the wheat: Robert Hathorn at the head of them, for Robert was one of the best reapers in the country side.

Many a sly jest passed at the expense of Patrick and his grand-daughter Rachael. The old man often answered, but Rachael hardly ever. At the close of the day they drew apart from all the rest, and seemed content when they were alone together.

In the course of a day or two the reapers began to observe that Rachael was very handsome; and then she became the object of much coarse admiration. Rachael was as little affected by this as by their satire. She evaded it with a cold contempt which left little more to be said: and then her rustic admirers took part with the women against her.

Rachael was pale; and perhaps this was one reason why her beauty did not strike the eye all at once; but when you came to know her face, she was beautiful. Her long eye-lashes were heavenly; her eye was full of soul; her features were refined, and her skin was white and transparent, and a slight blush came readily to it, at which moment she was lovely. It must be owned she did not appear to advantage in the field among the reapers; for there she seemed to feel at war; and her natural dignity degenerated into a certain doggedness. After a while Mrs. Hathorn took a fancy to her; and when she was beside this good motherly creature, her asperity seemed to soften down, and her coldness turned to a not unamiable pensiveness.

Mrs. Hathorn said one evening to Robert, 'Robert, look at that girl. Do try and find out what is the matter with her. She is a good girl as ever broke bread; but she breaks my heart to look at her, she is like a marble statue. It is not natural at her years to be so reserved.'

'Oh!' answered Robert, 'let her alone, there are

talkers enough in the world. She is a modest girl—the only one in the field, I should say, and that is a great ornament to all women, if they would but see it.'

'Well, Robert, at all events, have your eye on them; they are strangers, and the people about here are vulgar behaved to strangers, you know.'

'I'll take care; and as for Rachael, she knows how to answer the fools—I noticed that the first day.'

Sunday evening came; the villagers formed in groups about the ale-house, the stocks, and the other points of resort, and their occasional laughter fell discordantly upon the ear, so holy and tranquil seemed the air and the sky. Robert Hathorn strolled out at the back of the house to drink the Sabbath sunset after a week of toil: at the back of the largest barn was a shed, and from this shed as he drew near to it there issued sounds that seemed to him as sweetly in unison with that holy sunset as the villagers' rude mirth was out of tune. He came to the back of the shed, and it was Rachael reading the Bible aloud to her grandfather. The words were golden, and fell like dew upon all the spirits within their reach—upon Robert, who listened to them unseen; upon Patrick, whose testy nature was calmed and soothed, and upon Rachael herself, who seemed at this moment more hopeful, and less determined to shrink within herself. Her voice, always sweet and winning, became richer and mellower as she

read; and when she closed the book, she said with a modest fervour one would hardly have suspected her of, 'Blessed be God for this book, grandfather! I do think it is the best thing of all the good things He has given the world, and it is very encouraging to people of low condition like us.'

'Ay,' said the old man, 'those were bold words you read just now, "Blessed are the poor."'

'Let us take them to heart old man, since, strange as they sound, they must be true.'

Corporal Patrick pondered awhile in silence, then said he was weary: 'Let us bless the good people, whose bread we have eaten this while, and I will go to sleep; Rachael, my child, if it was not for you, I could wish not to wake again.'

Poor old man, he was a-weary; he had seen better days, and fourscore years is a great age, and he had been a soldier, and fought in great battles head erect, and now, in his feeble days, it was hard to have to bow the back and bend over the sickle among boys and girls who jeered him, and whose peaceful grandsires he had defended against England's enemies.

Corporal Patrick and his grand-daughter went into the barn to sleep, as heretofore, on the straw. Robert Hathorn paced thoughtfully home, and about half an hour after this a cowboy came into the barn to tell Corporal Patrick there were two truckle beds at his service in a certain loft, which he undertook to show

him. So the old soldier and Rachael bivouacked no longer in the barn.

'Who sent you?' said Rachael to the boy.

'Mistress.'

After this Robert Hathorn paid considerable attention both to Patrick and Rachael, and she showed by degrees that she was not quite ice to a man that could respect her; not that her manner was inviting even to him, but at least it was courteous, and once or twice she even smiled on him, and a beautiful smile it was when it did come; and whether from its beauty or its rarity made a great impression on all who saw it.

It was a fine harvest time upon the whole, and with some interruptions the work went merrily on; the two strangers, in spite of hard labour, improved in appearance. Mrs. Hathorn set this down to the plentiful and nourishing meals which issued twice a-day from her kitchen, and as they had always been her favourites she drew Robert's attention to the bloom, that began to spread over Rachael's cheek, and the old soldier's brightening eye, as her work in a great measure.

Mrs. Mayfield was away, and during her absence Hickman had not come once to visit his farm or Hathorn's. This looked ugly.

'Wife,' said the farmer one day, 'what makes our Robert so moody of late?'

'Oh, you have noticed it, have you? Then I am right; the boy has something on his mind.'

'That is easy to be seen, and I think I know what it is.'

'Do you, John; what?'

'Why, he sees this Hickman is in a fair way to carry off Rose Mayfield.'

'It is not that.'

'Why, what else can it be?'

'It is a wonder to me,' said Mrs. Hathorn, 'that a man shouldn't know his own son better than you seem to know Robert. They are very good friends; but what makes you think Robert would marry her? have you forgotten how strict he is about women? Why did he part with Lucy Blackwood, the only sweetheart he ever had?'

'Hanged if I remember.'

'Because she got herself spoken of flirting at Oxford Races once in a way; and Rose does mostly nothing else. And they do say, that once or twice since her husband died, a hem!—'

'She has kicked over the traces altogether? Fiddlestick!'

'Fiddlestick be it! She is a fine, spirity woman, and such are apt to set folk talking more than they can prove. Well, Robert wouldn't marry a woman that made folk talk about her.'

'Oh, he is not such a fool as to fling the farm to a stranger. When does Rose come home?'

'Next week, as soon as the assizes are over, and the Drayton cause settled one way or other.'

'Well, when she comes back you will see him clear up directly, and then I shall know what to do. They must come together, and they shall come together; and if there is no other way, I know one that will bring them together, and I'll work that way if I'm hanged for it.'

'With all my heart,' said Mrs. Hathorn, calmly: 'you can but try.'

'I *will* try all I know.'

Will it be believed, that while he was in this state of uneasiness about his favourite project, Mr. Casenower came and invited him to a friendly conference; announced to him that he admired Mrs. Mayfield beyond measure and had some reason to think she was not averse to him, and requested the farmer's co-operation?

'Confound the jade,' thought Hathorn, 'she has been spreading the net for this one too then: she will break my heart before I have done with her.'

He answered demurely, 'that he did not understand women; that his mind was just now in the harvest; and he hoped Mr. C. would excuse him, and try his luck himself—along with the rest,' said the old boy rather bitterly.

The harvest drew towards its close; the barns began to burst with the golden crops, and one fair rick after another rose behind them like a rear-guard, until one fine burning-hot day in September there remained nothing but a small barley-field to carry.

In the house Mrs. Hathorn and the servants were busy preparing the harvest-home dinner; in the farm-yard Casenower and old Hathorn were arguing a point of husbandry; the warm haze of a September day was over the fields; the little pigs toddled about contentedly in the straw of the farm-yard, rooting here and grunting there; the pigeons sat upon the barn tiles in flocks, and every now and then one would come shooting down, and settle with flapping wings upon a bit of straw six inches higher than the level; and ever and anon was heard the thunder of the horses' feet as they came over the oak floor of a barn, drawing a loaded waggon into it.

Suddenly a halloo was heard down the road; Mr. Casenower and Hathorn looked over the wall, and it was Mrs. Mayfield's boy Tom, riding home full pelt and hurrahing as he came along.

'We have won the day, farmer,' shouted he; 'you may dine at Drayton if you wool. La, bless you, the judge would'nt hear a word again us. Hurrah! here comes the mistress; hurrah!' And sure enough Mrs. Mayfield was seen in her hat and habit, riding her bay mare up at a hand gallop on the grass by the road side. Up she came; the two men waved their hats to her, which salute she returned on the spot, in the middle of a great shy which her mare made as a matter of course; but before they could speak she stopped their mouths. 'Where is Robert? not a word

till he is by. I have not forgot to whom I owe it.' She sprang from the saddle, and gave a hand to each of the men; but before they could welcome her, or congratulate her, she had the word again. 'Why of course you are; you are going to tell me you have been as dull as ditch-water since I went, as if I did'nt know that; and as for Drayton, we will all go there together in the afternoon, and I'll kiss your Robert then and there; and then he will faint away, and we'll come home in the cool of the evening. Is barley cart done yet?'

'No, you are just in time; they are in the last field.

'Well, I must run in and cuddle Jane, and help them on with dinner a bit.'

'Ay, do, Rose; put a little life into them.'

In about ten minutes Mrs. Mayfield joined them again; and old Hathorn, who had spent that period in a brown study, began operations upon her like a cautious general as he was.

His first step might be compared to reconnoitring the ground; and here, if any reader of mine imagines that country people are simple and devoid of art, for heaven's sake resign that notion, which is entirely founded on pastorals written in metropolitan garrets.

Country people look simple; but that is a part of their profound art. They are the square-nosed sharks of *terra firma*. Their craft is smooth, plausible, and unfathomable. You don't believe me, perhaps. Well,

then, my sharp cockney, go live and do business in the country, and tell me at the year's end whether you have not found humble unknown Practitioners of Humbug, Flattery, Over-reaching, and Manœuvre, to whom Thieves' Inn London might go to school.

We hear much, from such as write with the butt-end of their grandfather's flageolet, about simple swains and downy meads; but when you get there the natives are at least as downy as any part of the concern.

'I thought you would be home to-day, Rose.'

'Did you? Why?'

'Because Richard Hickman has been here twice this morning.'

'Richard Hickman? what was his business here?'

'Well, they do say you and he are to go to church together one of these days—the pair of you.'

'Well, if the pair of us go to church there will be a pair of weddings that day.'

'How smooth a lie do come off a woman's tongue, to be sure!' thought Mr. Hathorn.

Mr. Casenower put in his word. 'I trust I shall not offend you by my zeal, Madam, but I hope to see you married to a better man than Hickman.'

'With all my heart, Mr. Cas— hem! You find me a better man, and I won't make two bites at him—ha! ha! ha!'

'He bears an indifferent character—ask the farmer here.'

'Oh,' said the farmer, with an ostentation of candour, 'I don't believe all I hear.'

'I don't believe half, nor a quarter,' said Mrs. M.; 'but, for Heaven's sake, don't fancy I am wrapped up in Richard Hickman, or in any other man; but he is as good company as here and there one, and he has a tidy farm nigh hand, and good land of his own out Newbury way, by all accounts.'

'Good land,' shouted the farmer: 'did you ever see it?'

'Not I.'

'Rose,' said Hathorn, solemnly (he had never seen it either), 'it is as poor as death! covered with those long docks, I hear, and that is a sure sign of land with no heart in it, just as a thistle is a good sign. Do your books tell you that?' said he, suddenly turning to Casenower.

'No,' said that gentleman, with incredulous contempt.

'And it is badly farmed; no wonder, when the farmer never goes nigh it himself, trusts all to a sort of bailiff. Mind your eye, Rose. Why does he never go there? tell me that.'

'Well, you know, of course he tells me he left it out of regard for me.'

'Haw! haw! haw! why he has known you but six months, and he has not lived at home this five years. What do you think of it, Mr. Casenower? Mind your eye, Rose.'

'I mean to,' said Rose, and if you had seen the

world of suppressed fun and peeping observation in the said eye, you would have felt how capable it was of minding itself, and of piercing like a gimlet even through a rustic Machiavel.

Mr. Casenower whispered to Hathorn, 'Put in a word for me.' He then marched up to Rose, and taking her hand, said with a sepulchral tenderness, at which Rose's eyes literally danced in her head, 'Know your own value, dear Mrs. Mayfield, and do not throw yourself away on an unworthy object.' He then gave Hathorn a slight wink and disappeared, leaving his cause in that simple rustic's hands.

'It is all very fine, but if I am to wait for a man without a fault, I shall die an old—fool.'

'That is not to be thought of,' said Hathorn smoothly; 'but what you want is a fine steady young man—like my Robert, now.'

'So you have told me once or twice of late,' said the lady archly. 'Robert is a good lad, and pleases my eye well enough, for that matter; but he has a fault that wouldn't suit me, nor any woman I should think, without she was a fool.'

'Why, what is wrong about the boy?'

'The boy looks sharper after women than women will bear. He reads everything we do with magnifying glasses: and I like fun, always did, and always shall; and then he would be jealous—and then I should leave him the house to himself, that is all.'

'No, no! you would break him in to common sense.'

'More likely he would make a slave of me; and, if I am to be one, let me gild the chain a bit, as the saying is.'

'Now, Rose,' said the tactician, 'you know very well a woman can turn a man round her finger if he loves her.'

'Of course I know that; but Robert does not happen to love me.'

'Doesn't love you! Ay, but he does!'

'What makes you think that?'

'Oh, if you are blind I am not. He tries to hide it, because you are rich, and he is poor and proud.'

'Oh, fie! don't talk nonsense. What signifies who has the money?'

'The way I first found it out is, when they speak of you marrying that Hickman he trimbles all over like. Here comes his mother; you ask her,' added the audacious schemer.

'No, no!' cried Mrs. Mayfield; 'none of your nonsense before her, if you please;' and she ran off with a heightened colour.

'I shall win the day,' cried Hathorn to his wife. 'I have made her believe Robert loves her, and now I'll tell him she dotes on him. Why, what is the matter with you? You seem put out. What ails you?'

'I have just seen Robert, and I don't like his looks.

He is like a man in a dream this morning—worse than ever.'

'Why, what can be the matter with him?'

'If I was to tell you my thought it wouldn't please you—and after all, I may be wrong. Hush! here he is. Take no notice, for Heaven's sake.'

At this moment the object of his father's schemes and his mother's anxiety sauntered up to them, with his coat tied round his neck by the arms, and a pitch-fork over his shoulder. 'Father,' said he, 'you may tap the barrel; the last waggon is coming up the lane.'

'Ay,' was the answer; 'and you go and offer your arm to Rose—she is come home—and ask her to dance with you.'

'I am not in the humour to gallivant,' was the languid answer. 'I leave that to you, father.'

'To me—at my time of life! Is that the way to talk at eight-and-twenty? And Rose Mayfield—the rose-tree in full blossom!'

'Yes; but too many have been smelling at the blossom for me ever to plant the tree in my garden.'

'What does the boy mean?'

'To save time and words, father; because you have been at me about her once or twice of late.'

'What! is it because she likes dancing and diversion at odd times? Is that got to be a crime, Parson Bob?'

'No! but I won't have a wife I couldn't trust at those pastimes,' was the resolute answer.

'Oh! if you are one of the jealous-minded ones, don't you marry any one, my poor chap!'

'Father, there are the strange reapers to pay. Shall I settle with them for you?' said Robert, quietly.

'No! Let them come here; I'll pay them,' answered Hathorn, senior, rather sullenly.

If you want to be crossed and thwarted and vexed, set your heart not on a thing you can do yourself, but on something somebody else is to do: if you want to be tormented to death, let the wish of your heart depend upon *two* people, a man and a woman, neither of them yourself. Now do try this recipe; you will find it an excellent one.

Old Hathorn, seated outside his own door, with a table and money bags before him, paid the Irishmen and the Hampshire lads, and invited each man to the harvest-home dinner. He was about to rise and put up his money bags, when Mrs. Hathorn cried to him from the house, 'Here are two more that have not been paid;' and the next minute old Patrick and Rachael issued from the house, and came in front of the table. Robert, who was going in to dress, turned round and leaned against the corner of the house, with his eyes upon the ground. 'Let me see,' said Hathorn, 'what are you to have?'

'Count yourself,' replied Patrick; 'you know what you give the others.'

'What I give the others! but you can't have done the work—'

'Not of two; no, we don't ask the wages of two.'

'Of course you don't.'

A spasm of pain crossed Robert's face at this discussion, but he remained with his eyes upon the ground.

'Where's the dispute,' said the old soldier, angrily; 'here are two that ask the wages of one; is that hard upon you?'

'There is no dispute, old man,' said Robert steadily. 'Father, twenty-five times five shillings is six pound five; that is what you owe them.'

'Six pound five, for a man of that age?'

'And my daughter; is she to go for nothing?'

'Your daughter, your daughter; she is not strong enough to do much, I'm sure.'

Rachael colored: her clear convincing voice fell upon the disputants. 'We agreed with Master Robert to keep a ridge between us, and we have done it as well as the best reaper. Pay us as one good reaper, then.'

'That's fair! that is fair! If you agreed with my son, a bargain is a bargain; but for all that, one good arm is better than two weak ones, and—'

This tirade received an unexpected interruption. Robert walked up to the table, without lifting his eyes

from the ground, and said, 'I ask your pardon, father, your bad leg has kept you at home this harvest; but I rip't at the head of the band, and I assure you the young woman did a man's share; and every now and then the old man took her place; and so resting by turns they kept ahead of the best sickle there. And therefore I say,' continued Robert, raising his eyes timidly, 'on account of their poverty, their weary limbs, and their stout heart for work, you cannot pay them less than one good reaper.'

'What is it, Robert?' said Mrs. Hathorn, who had come out to see the meaning of all this.

'But if he would be juster still, mother, like him that measures his succour to the need, he would pay them as one and a half; I've said it.'

Hathorn stared with ludicrous wonder. 'And why not as two? Are you mad, Robert? taking their part against me?'

'Enough said,' answered Patrick with spirit. 'Thank you, Master Robert, but that would be an alms, and we take but our due. Pay our two sickles as one, and let us go.'

'You see father,' cried Robert, 'these are decent people; and if you had seen how they wrought, your heart would melt as mine does. O mother! it makes me ill to think there are poor Christians in the world so badly off they must bow to work beyond their age and strength to bear. Take a thought, father. A

man that might be *your* father—a man of four-score years—and a delicate woman—to reap, the hardest of all country work, from dawn till sun-down, under this scorching sun and wind that has dried my throat and burnt my eyes,—let alone theirs. It is hard, father; and if you have a feeling heart you can't show it better than here.'

'There! there!' cried the farmer, 'say no more; it is all right (you have made the girl cry, Bob). Robert doesn't often speak, dame, so we are bound to listen when he does. There is the money. I never heard that chap say so many words before.'

'We thank you all,' said Patrick; 'my blessing be on your grain, good folks; and that won't hurt you from a man of four-score.'

'That it will not, Daddy Patrick,' said Mrs. Hathorn. 'You will stay for harvest-home, both of you? Rachael, if you have a mind to help me, wash some of the dishes.'

'Ay!' cried the farmer: 'and it is time you were dressed, Bob.' And so the party separated.

A few minutes later Rachael came to the well, and began to draw a bucket of water. This well worked in the following manner; A chain and rope were passed over a cylinder, and two buckets were attached to the several ends of the rope, so that the empty bucket descending, helped in some slight degree the full bucket to mount. This cylinder was turned by an

iron handle. The well was a hundred feet deep. Rachael drew the bucket up easily enough until the last thirty feet; and then she found it hard work. She had both hands on the iron handle, and was panting a little like a tender fawn, when a deep but gentle voice said in her ear, 'Let go, Rachael;' and the handle was taken out of her hand by Robert Hathorn.

'Never mind me, Master Robert,' said Rachael, giving way reluctantly.

('Always at some hard work or other,' said he; 'you will not be easy till you kill yourself.') And with this he whirled the handle round like lightning with one hand, and the bucket came up in a few moments. He then filled a pitcher for her, which she took up, and was about to go into the house with it. 'Stay one minute, Rachael.'

'Yes, Master Robert.'

'How old are you, Rachael?' Robert blushed after he had put this question; but he was obliged to say something, and he did not well know how to begin.

'Twenty-two,' was Rachael's answer.

'Don't go just yet. Is this your first year's reaping?'

'No, the third.'

'You must be very poor, I am afraid.'

'Very poor indeed, Master Robert.'

'Do you live far from here?'

'Don't you remember I told you I came twenty miles from here?'

'Why, Newbury is about that distance.'

'I think your mother will want me.'

'Well, don't let me keep you against your will.'

Rachael entered the Hathorn's side.

Robert's heart sank. She was so gentle, yet so cold and sad. There was no winning her confidence, it appeared. Presently she returned with an empty basket to fetch the linen from Mrs. Mayfield's side. As she passed Robert, who, in despair, had determined not to try any more, but who looked up sorrowfully in her face, she gave him a smile, a very faint one, but still it did express some slight recognition and thanks. His resolve melted at this one little ray of kindly feeling.

'Rachael,' said he, 'have you any relations your way?'

'Not now!' and Rachael was a beautiful statue again.

'But you have neigbours who are good to you?'

'We ask nothing of them.'

'Would it not be better if you could both live near us?'

'I think not.'

'Why? my mother has a good heart.'

'Indeed she has.'

'And Mrs. Mayfield is not a bad one, either.'

'I hear her well spoken of.'

'And yet you mean to live on, so far away from all of us?'

'Yes! I must go for the linen.' She waited a moment as it were for permission to leave him, and nothing more being said, she entered Mrs. Mayfield's side.

Robert leaned his head sorrowfully on the rails and fell into a reverie.

'I am nothing to her,' thought he; 'her heart is far away. How good, and patient, and modest she is, but oh, how cold! She turns my heart to stone. I am a fool; she has some one in her own country to whom she is as warm, perhaps, as she is cold to us strangers—is that a fault? She is too beautiful, and too good, not to be esteemed by others beside me. Ah! her path is one way, mine another—worse luck—would to God she had never come here! Well, may she be happy! She can't hinder me from praying she may be happy, happier than she is now. Poor Rachael!'

A merry but somewhat vulgar voice broke incredibly harsh and loud, as it seemed, upon young Hathorn's reverie.

'Good day, Master Robert.'

Robert looked up, and there stood a young farmer in shooting jacket and gaiters, with a riding-whip in his hand.

'Good morning, Mr. Hickman.'

'The Mistress is come home, I hear, and it is your harvest-home to-day, so I'll stop here, for I am tired, and so is my horse for that matter.' Mr. Hickman

wasted the latter part of this discourse on vacancy, for young Hawthorn went coolly away without taking any further notice of him.

'I call that the cold shoulder,' thought Hickman: 'but it is no wonder; that chap wants to marry her himself, of course he does—not if I know it, Bob Hathorn.'

It was natural that Hickman, whose great object just now was Rose Mayfield, should put this reading on Robert's coldness: but in point of fact, it was not so; the young man had no feeling towards Hickman but the quiet repugnance of a deep to a shallow soul, of a quiet and thoughtful to a rattling fellow. Only just now gaiety was not in his heart, and as Hickman was generally gay, and always sonorous, he escaped to his own thoughts. Hickman watched his retreat with an eye that said, 'You are my rival, but not one I fear: I can out-wit you.' And it was with a smile of triumphant conscious superiority that Richard Hickman turned round to go into Mrs. Mayfield's house, and found himself face to face with Rachael, who was just coming out of it with the basket full of linen in her hand.

Words cannot paint the faces of this woman and this man, when they saw one another. They both started, and were red and white by turns, and their eyes glared upon one another; yet, though the surprise was equal, the emotion was not quite the same. The woman stood, her bosom heaving slowly and high, her eye

dilating, her lips apart, her elastic figure rising higher and higher. She stood there wild as a startled panther, uncertain whether to fight or to fly. The man, after the first start, seemed to cower under her eye, and half a dozen expressions that chased one another across his face left one fixed there—Fear! abject fear!

CHAPTER II.

THEY eyed one another in silence: at last Hickman looked down upon the ground and said, in faltering, ill-assured tones, 'H-how d' ye do, Rachael? I—I didn't expect to see you here.'

'Nor I you.'

'If you are busy, don't let me stop you, you know,' said Hickman, awkwardly and confused, and, like one with no great resources compelled to utter something.

Then Rachael, white as a sheet, took up her basket again, and moved away in silence; the young farmer eyed her apprehensively, and, being clearly under the influence of some misgiving as to her intentions, said. 'If you blow me it will do me harm and you no good, you know, Rachael. Can't we be friends?'

'Friends!—you and I?'

'Don't be in such a hurry—let us talk it over. I am a little better off than I used to be in those days.'

'What is that to me?'

'Plenty; if you won't be spiteful, and set others against me in this part:'—by 'others,' doubtless Hickman intended Mrs. Mayfield.

'I shall neither speak nor think of you,' was the cold answer.

Had Richard Hickman been capable of fathoming Rachael Wright, or even of reading her present marble look and tone aright, he would have seen that he had little to apprehend from her beyond contempt, a thing he would not in the least have minded; but he was cunning, and, like the cunning, shallowish, so he pursued his purpose feeling his way with her to the best of his ability.

'I have had a smart bit of money left me lately, Rachael.'

'What is that to me?'

'What is it? why, a good deal, because I could assist you *now*, maybe.'

'And what right have you to assist me *now*!'

'Confound it, Rachael, how proud you are!—why you are not the same girl. Oh! I see, as for assisting you, I know you would rather work than be in debt to any one; but then there is another besides you, you know.'

'What other?' said Rachael, losing her impassibility, and trembling all over at this simple word.

'What other? why, confound it, who ever saw a girl fence like this. I suppose you think I am not man

enough to do what's right; I am though now I have got the means.'

'To do what?'

'Why to do my duty by him—to provide for him.'

'FOR WHOM?' cried Rachael wildly, 'WHEN HE IS DEAD!'

'Dead?'

'Dead!'

'Don't say so, Rachael; don't say so.'

'He is dead!'

'Dead! I never thought I should have cared much; but that word do seem to knock against my heart. I'd give a hundred pounds to any one would tell me it is not true—poor thing; I've been to blame; I've been to blame.'

'You were not near us when he came into the world; you were not near us when he went out of it. He lived in poverty with me; he died in poverty for all I could do, and it is against my will if I did not die with him. Our life or our death gave you no care. Whiles he lived, you received a letter every six months from me, claiming my rights as your wife.'

Hickman nodded assent.

'Last year you had no letter.'

'No more there was.'

'And did not that tell you? Poor Rachael had lost her consolation and her hope, and had no more need of anything!'

'Poor Rachael!' cried the man, stung with sudden remorse. 'Curse it all! Curse you, Dick Hickman!' Then, suddenly recovering his true nature, and, like us men, never at a loss for an excuse against a woman, he said angrily, 'What is the use of letters—why didn't you come and tell me you were so badly off?'

'Me come after you the wrong-doer?'

'Oh! confound your pride! should have sent the old man to me, then.'

'My grandfather, an old soldier as proud as fire! Send him to the man who robbed me of my good name by cheating the law. You are a fool! Three times he left our house with his musket loaded to kill you—three times I got him home again; but how?—by prayers, and tears, and force—all three, or you would not be here in life.'

'The devil! what an old Tartar! I say, is he here along with you?'

'Oh, you need not fear,' said Rachael, with a faint expression of scorn, 'he is going directly, and I am going too; and when I do go from here I shall have lost all the little pleasure and hope I have in the world,' said Rachael, sorrowfully, and, as she said this, she became unconscious of Hickman's presence, and moved away without looking at him; but that prudent person dared not part with her so. He was one of those men who say, 'I know the women,' and, in his sagacity, he dreaded this woman's tongue. He determined,

therefore, to stop her tongue, and not to risk Rose Mayfield and thousands for a few pounds.

'Now, Rachael, listen to me. Since the poor child is dead, there is only you to think of. We can do one another good or harm, you and I; better good than harm, I say. Suppose I offered you twenty pounds, now, to keep dark?'

'You poor creature!'

'Well, thirty, then?'

'Oh! hold your tongue—you make me ashamed of myself as well as you.'

'I see what it is, you want too much; you want me to be your husband.'

'No; while my child lived, I claimed my right for his sake; but not now, not now,' and the poor girl suddenly turned her eyes on Hickman with an indescribable shudder, that a woman would have interpreted to the letter; but no man could be expected to read it quite aright, so many things it said.

Hickman, the sagacious, chose to understand by it pique and personal hostility to him, and desire of vengeance; and, having failed to bribe her, he now resolved to try and outface her.

It so happened that at this very moment merry voices began to sound on every side. The clatter was heard of tables being brought out of the kitchen, and the harvest-home people were seen coming towards the place where Rachael and Hickman were; so Hickman

said, hastily, 'Any way, don't think to blow me—for if you do, I'll swear ye out, my lass, I'll swear ye out.'

'No doubt you know how to lie,' was the cold reply.

'There, Rachael,' cried Hickman, piteously, lowering his tone of defiance in a moment; 'don't expose me before the folk, whatever you do. Here they all come, confound them!'

Rachael made no answer. She retired into the Hathorns' house, and in a few minutes the tables were set just outside the house, and loaded with good cheer, and the rustics began to ply knife and fork as zealously as they had sickle, and rake, and pitchfork; and so, on the very spot of earth where Rachael had told Hickman her child was dead and with him her heart, scarce five minutes afterwards came the rattle of knives and forks, and peals of boisterous laughter and huge feeding. And thus it happens to many a small locality in this world—tragedy, comedy, and farce are acted on it by turns, and all of them in earnest. So harvest-home dinner proceeded with great zeal; and after the solids the best ale was served round *ad libitum;* and intoxication, sanctified by immemorial usage, followed in due course. However, as this symptom of harvest was a long time coming on upon the present occasion, owing to peculiar interruptions, the reader will not have to follow us so far, which let us hope he will not regret.

Few words, worthy of being embalmed in an immortal story, warranted to live a month, were uttered during the discussion of the meats, for when the *fruges consumere nati* are let loose upon beef, bacon, and pudding, among the results dialogue on a large scale is not.

'Yet shall the Muse' embalm a conversation that passed on this occasion between the Brothers Messenger, labourers aged about fifty, who had been on this farm nearly all their lives.

Bob Messenger was carving a loin of veal. Jem Messenger sat opposite him, eating bacon and beans on a very large scale.

Bob, (aiming at extraordinary politeness): 'Wool you have some veal along with your bacon, Jem?'

Jem. 'That I wool not, Bob,' (with a reproachful air, as one whom a brother had sought to entrap.)

When the table was cleared of the viands, the ale-mugs and horns were filled, and Mrs. Mayfield and the Hathorns took part in the festive ceremony—that is, they did not sit at the table, but they showed themselves from time to time, and made their humble guests heartily welcome by word and look and smile, as their forefathers had done at harvest-time each in their century and generation.

Presently Bob Messenger arose solemnly, with his horn of ale in his hand. The others rose after him, knowing well what he was going to do, and chaunted with him the ancient Harvest-home stave:—

'Here's a health unto our master,
The founder of the feast,
Not only to our master,
But to our mistress.
Two Voices. Then drink, boys, drink,
And see as you do not spill,
For if you do you shall drink to
Our health with a free goodwill.
Chorus. Then drink, boys, drink,' &c.

Corporal Patrick and Rachael left the table. They had waited only to take part in this compliment to their entertainers, and now they left. The reason was, one or two had jeered them before grace.

The corporal had shaved and made himself very clean, and he had put on his faded red jacket, which he always carried about, and Rachael had washed his neck-handkerchief, and tied it neatly about his neck, and had put on herself a linen collar and linen wrist-band, very small and plain, but white and starched; and, at this their humble attempt to be decent and nice, one or two, (who happened to be dirty at the time), could not help sneering. Another thing, Rachael and Patrick were strangers. Some natives cut a jest or two at their expense, and Patrick was about to answer by flinging his mug at one man's head, but Rachael restrained him, and said, 'Be patient, grandfather. They were never taught any better. When the farmer's health has been drunk we can leave them.'

People should be able to take jests, or to answer them in kind, not to take them to heart; but Rachael

and Patrick had seen better days, (they were not so very proud and irritable then), and now Patrick, naturally high spirited, was sore, and could not bear to be filliped, and Rachael was become too cold and bitter towards all the vulgar natures that blundered up against her, not meaning her any good nor much harm either, poor devils!

A giggle greeted their departure; but it must be owned it was a somewhat uneasy giggle.

There was in the company a certain Timothy Brown John, who was naturally a shoemaker, but was turned out into the stubble annually at harvest time. The lad had a small rustic genius for music, which he illustrated by playing the clarionet in church to the great regret of the clergyman. Now after the chorus one or two were observed to be nudging this young man, and he to be making those mock-modest difficulties which are part of a singer in town or country.

'Ay, Tim,' cried Mrs. Mayfield, 'you sing us a song.'

'He have got a new one, Mistress!' put in a carter's lad, with saucer eyes.

'What is it about boy?'

'Well,' replied the youngster, 'it is about love,' (at which the girls giggled); 'and I think it is about you, Dame Mayfield.'

'About me! then it must be nice.'

Chorus of Rustics—'Haw! haw! haw!'

'Come, Mr. Brown John, I will trouble you for it, directly. I can see the bottom of some of their mugs, Jane.'

'Well,' said Mr. Brown John, looking down, 'I don't know what to say about it. Mayhap, you might n't like it quite so well before so much company.'

'Why not? pray.'

'Well, you see, Dame, I am afeard I shall give you a red face, like, with this here song.'

'If you do, I'll give you one with this here hand.'

Chorus—'Haw, haw! Ho!'

'Drat the boy, sing, and have done with it.'

'I'll do my best, Ma'am,' replied Tim gravely.

On this, Mr. Brown John drew from his pocket a diminutive flute, with one key, and sounded his G at great length. He then paused, to let his G enter his own mind and those around; he then composed his features like a preacher, and was about to enter on his undertaking, when the whole operation was suddenly and remorselessly and provokingly interrupted by Mr. Casenower, who, struck as it appeared with a sudden irresistible idea, burst upon them all with this question—

'Do any of you know one Rebecca Reid, in this part of the world?

The company stared.

Some, to whom this question had been put by him before, giggled, others scratched their heads; others got no farther than a stricken look. A few mustered

together their wits, and assured Mr. Casenower they had never heard tell of the 'wench.'

'How odd,' cried Casenower, 'it is not such a common combination of sounds, one would think.'

'I know Hannah Reid,' squeaked a small cow-boy; he added, with enthusiasm, 'she is a capital slider, she is! ! !' and he smiled at some reminiscence, perchance of a joint somersault upon the ice last winter.

'Hannah does not happen to be Rebecca, young gentleman,' objected Casenower; 'sing away, John Brown.'

'I'm agoing, sir. G——g——g——g——' and he impressed the key note once more upon their souls. Then sang Brown John the following song, and the rest made the laughing chorus, and, as they all laughed in different ways, though they began laughing from their heads, ended in laughing from their hearts. It was pleasant and rather funny, and proved so successful, that after this *Il Maestro* Brown John and his song were asked to all the feasts in a circle of seven miles.

There were eight verses: we will confine ourselves to two, because paper is not absolutely valueless, whatever the trivoluminous may think.

'When Richard appeared, how my heart pit-a-pat
With a tenderly motion, with which it was seized!
To hear the young fellow's gay innocent chat
I could listen for ever—oh dear! I'm so pleased!
I 'm so pleased! ha! ha! ha! ha!
I' m so pleased! ha! ha! ha! ha!
I'm agoing to be married—oh dear! I'm so pleased!
I'm agoing to be married—oh dear! I'm so pleased!
Chorus. I 'm so pleased, &c.

'Oh, sweet is the smell of the new-mown hay,
And sweet are the cowslips that spring in May;
But sweeter's my lad than the daisied lawn,
Or the hay, or the flower, or the cows at the dawn.
I'm so pleased,' &c.

We writers can tell 'the what,' but not so very often 'the how,' of anything. I can give Tim's bare words, but it is not in my power nor any man's to write down the manner of *Il Maestro* in singing. How he dwelt on the short syllables, and abridged the long—his grave face till he came to his laugh—and then the enormous mouth that flew suddenly open and the jovial peal that came ringing through two rows of teeth like white chess-pawns, and with all this his quaint, indescribable, dulcet, rustic twang, that made his insignificant melody ring like church bells heard from the middle of a wood, and taste like metheglin come down to us in a yew-tree cask from the Druids!

During the song, one Robert Munday and his son, rural fiddlers, who by instinct nosed festivities, appeared at the gate each with a green bag. A shriek of welcome greeted them; they were set in a corner, with beef and ale galore, and soon the great table was carried in, the ground cleared, the couples made, and the fiddles tuning.

The Messrs. Munday made some preliminary flourishes, like hawks hovering uncertain where to pounce, and then, like the same bird, they suddenly dashed into 'The Day in June.'

Their style was rough, and bore a family likeness to ploughing, but it was true, clean, and spirited; the notes of the *arpeggio* danced out like starry sparks in fireworks.

Moreover, the Messrs. Munday played to the foot, which is precisely what your melted-butter-violinist always fails to do, whether he happens to be washing out the soul of a waltz, or of a polka, or of a reel.

They also played so as to raise the spirits of all who heard them, young or old, which is an artistic effect of the very highest order however attained, and never is and never will be attained by the melted-butter-violinist.

The fiddlers being merry, the dancers were merry; the dancers being merry, the fiddlers said to themselves 'Aha! we have not missed fire,' and so grew merrier still; and thus the electric fire of laughter and music darted to and fro. Dance, sons and daughters of toil! None had ever a better right to dance than you have this sunny afternoon in clear September. It was you who painfully ploughed the stiff soil; it was you who trudged up the high incommoding furrow and cast abroad the equal seed. You that are women bowed the back and painfully drilled holes in the soil, and poured in the seed; and this month past you have all bent, and with sweating brows cut down and housed the crops that came from the seed you planted. Dance! for those yellow ricks, trophies of your labour,

say you have a right to; those barns, bursting with golden fruit, swear you have a right to. Harvest-tide comes but once a year. Dance! sons and daughters of toil. Exult over your work, smile with the smiling year, and, in this bright hour, oh, cease my poor souls to envy the rich and great! Believe me, they are never, at any hour of their lives, so cheery as you are now. How can they be? With them dancing is tame work, an every-day business—no rarity, no treat—don't envy them—God is just, and deals the sources of content with a more equal hand than appears on the surface of things. Dance, too, without fear; let no Puritan make you believe it is wrong; things are wrong out of season, and right in season; to dance in harvest is as becoming as to be grave in church. The Almighty has put it into the hearts of insects to dance in the afternoon sun, and of men and women in every age and every land to dance round the gathered crop, whether it be corn, or oil, or wine, or any other familiar miracle that springs up sixty-fold and nurtures and multiplies the life of man. More fire, fiddlers! play to the foot, play to the heart, the sprightly 'Day in June.' Ay! foot it freely, lads and lasses; my own heart is warmer to think you are merry once or twice in your year of labour—dance, my poor brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of toil!

After several dances, Mrs. Mayfield, who had been uneasy in her mind at remaining out of the fun, could

bear inaction no longer, so she pounced on Robert Hathorn and drew him into the magic square. Robert danced, but in a very listless way: so much so, that his mother, who stood by, took occasion to give him a push and say, 'Is that the way to dance?' at which poor Robert tried to do better, but his limbs, as well as his face, showed how far his heart was from his heels.

Now, in the middle of this dance, suddenly loud and angry sounds were heard approaching, and the voice of old Patrick was soon distinguished, and the next moment he was seen following Mr. Hickman, and, hanging on his rear, loading him with invective. Rachael was by his side, endeavouring, in vain, to soothe him, and to end what to her was a most terrible scene. At a gesture from Mrs. Mayfield, the fiddlers left off and the rustics turned, all curiosity, towards the interruption. 'There are bad hearts in the world,' shouted Patrick to all present 'vermin that steal into honest houses and file* them—bad hearts, that rob the poor of that which is before life; oh, yes, far before life!' and as he uttered the words, Patrick was observed to stagger.

'The old man is drunk,' said Hickman. 'I don't know what he means.'

Rachael coloured high and cried, 'No! Master Robert, I assure you he is not drunk, but he is not

* For defile.

himself; he has been complaining this hour past; see! look at his eye. Good people, my grandfather is ill;' and indeed, as she said these words, Patrick, who from the moment he had staggered, had stared wildly and confusedly around him, suddenly bowed his head and dropped upon his knees; he would have fallen on his face, but Rachael's arm now held him up.

In a moment several persons came round them; amongst the rest Robert and Mrs. Mayfield. Robert loosened his neckcloth, and looking at the old man's face and eye, he said, gravely and tenderly, 'Rachael, I have seen the like of this before—in harvest.'

'Oh, Master Robert, what is it?

'Rachael, it is a stroke of the sun!'—he turned to his mother. 'God forgive us all, the old man was never fit for the work we have put him to.'

'Come, don't stand gaping there,' cried Mrs. Mayfield; 'mount my mare and gallop for the doctor—don't spare her—off with you! Betsy, get a bed ready in my garret.'

'Eh, dear!' said Mrs. Hathorn, 'I doubt the poor thing's troubles are over,' and she put up her apron and began to cry.

'Oh, no!' cried Rachael. 'Grandfather—don't leave me!—don't leave me!'

Corporal Patrick's lips moved.

'I can't see ye! I can't see any of ye!' he said, half fretfully. 'Ah!' he resumed, as if a light had broken

in on him. 'Yes!' said he very calmly, 'I think I am going;' but the next moment he cried in tones that made the bystanders thrill, so wild and piteous they were—'My daughter! my daughter!—she will miss me!'

Robert Hathorn fell on his knees, and took the old hand with one of those grasps that bring soul into contact with soul; the old soldier, who was at this moment past seeing or hearing, felt this grasp, and turned to it as an unconscious plant turns to the light. 'I can't see you,' said he faintly; 'but, whoever you are, take care of my child!—she is such a good child!' The hands spoke to one another still; then the old soldier almost smiled, and the anxious frightened look of his face began to calm. 'Thank God,' he faltered, 'they are going to take care of my child!' And, almost with these words, he lost all sense, and lay pale, and calm, and motionless at their feet, and his hand could grasp Robert's no more. There was a moment of dead silence and inquiring looks. Robert looked into his face gravely and attentively.

When he had so inspected him a little while, he turned to them all, and he said, in a deep and almost a stern voice,

'Hats off!'

They all uncovered, and stood looking like stricken deer at the old soldier as he lay. The red jacket had nothing ridiculous now. When it was new and bright,

it had been in great battles. They asked themselves now had they really sneered at this faded rag of England's glory, and at that withered hero?

'Did n't think the old man was a going to leave us like that,' said one of these rough penitents, 'or I 'd never ha wagged my tongue again un.'

Mrs. Mayfield gave orders to have him carried up to her garret: and four stout rustics, two at his head and two at his feet, took him up the stairs, and laid him there on a decent bed. When Rachael saw the clean floor, the little carpet round the foot of the bed, the bright walls and windows, and the snowy sheets made ready for her grandfather, she hid her face and wept, and said but two words—'too late! too late!'

As Rachael was following her grandfather up the stairs, she met Hickman: that worthy had watched this sorrowful business in silence; he had tears in his eyes, and coming to her, he whispered in her ear, 'Rachael, don't fret—I will not desert you now.' On the landing, a moment after, Rachael met Robert Hathorn: he said to her, 'Rachael, your grandfather trusted you to me.'

When Hickman said that to her, Rachael turned and looked at him.

When Robert said that to her, she lowered her eyes away from him.

CHAPTER III.

THE poor battered soldier lay some hours between life and death. Just before sunrise, Rachael, who had watched him all night, and often moistened his temples with vinegar, opened the window; and as the morning air came into the room, a change for the better was observed in the patient—a slight colour stole into his pale cheeks, and he seemed to draw a fuller breath, and his heart beat more perceptibly. Rachael kneeled and prayed for him, and then she prayed to him not to leave her alone: the sun had been up about an hour, and came fiery bright into the white-washed room; for it looked towards the East; and Corporal Patrick's lips moved, but without uttering a sound. Rachael prayed for him again and most fervently. About nine o'clock his lips moved, and this time he spoke,—

'——— Rear rank, right wheel!—'

The next moment, a light shot into his eye. His looks rested upon Rachael: he smiled feebly, but contentedly, then closed his eyes, and slumbered again.

Corporal Patrick lived. But it was a near thing, a very near thing—he was saved by one of those accidents we call luck. When Mrs. Mayfield's Tom rode for the doctor, the doctor was providentially out. Had he

been in, our tale would be now bidding farewell to Corporal Patrick—for this doctor was one of the pig-sticking ones. He loved to stab men and women with a tool that has slain far more than the sword in modern days; it is called 'the lancet.' Had he found a man insensible, he would have stabbed him; he always stabbed a fellow-creature when he caught it insensible: not very generous, was it?—now had he drawn from those old veins one table-spoonful of that red fluid which is the life of a man, the aged man would have come to his senses only to sink the next hour, and die for want of that vital stream stolen from him by rule.

As it was he breathed; and came back to life by slow degrees. At first his right arm was powerless; then he could not move the right leg, but at last he recovered the use of his limbs, but remained feeble, and his poor head was sore confused: one moment he would be quite himself; another his memory of recent events would be obscured—and then he would shake his head and sigh—but Nature was strong in him; and he got better—but slowly.

As soon as he was able to walk, Rachael proposed to Mrs. Mayfield to return home, but Mrs. Hathorn interposed, and requested Rachael to take her own servant's place for another week, in order to let the servant visit her friends. On these terms Rachael remained, and did the work of the Hathorns' house,

and it was observed that during this period more colour came to her cheek, and her listlessness and languor sensibly diminished.

She was very active and zealous in her work, and old Hathorn was so pleased with her, that he said one day to Mrs. Hathorn: 'I don't care if Betsy never comes back at all; this one is worth a baker's dozen of her, this Rachael.'

'Betsy will serve our turn as well in the long run,' said Mrs. Hathorn, somewhat drily and thoughtfully.

'Betsy!' replied the farmer, contemptuously; 'there is more sense in this Rachael's forefinger than in that wench's whole carcass.'

It was about two days after this, that the following conversation took place between Robert Hathorn and his mother:—

'Is it true, what I hear, that Mr. Patrick talks about going next week?'

'Have not they been here long enough, Robert? I wish they may not have been here too long.'

'Why too long, when you asked them to stay yourself, mother?'

'Yes, I did, and I doubt I did very wrong. But it is hard for a mother to deny her son.'

'I am much obliged to you, mother, but I don't remember that ever I asked you.'

'No! no! I don't say that you ever spoke your mind, Robert; but you looked up in my face, and

showed your wish plain enough to *my* eye; and you see a poor foolish body like me doesn't know how to say no to her boy that never vexed her. I should have been a better friend to you if I had turned my head away, and made-believe not to see what is in your heart.'

Robert paused awhile, then in a low anxious voice, he whispered,

'Don't you like her, mother?'

'Yes! I like her, my poor soul. What is there to dislike in her? But I don't know her?'

'But I know her as well as if we had been seven years acquainted.'

'You talk like a child! How can you know a girl that comes from a strange part?'

'I'd answer for her, mother.'

'I wouldn't answer for any young wench of them all! I do notice she is very close: ten to one if she has not an acquaintance of some sort, good or bad.'

'A bad acquaintance, mother! Never! If you had seen her through all the harvest-month as I did, respect herself and make others respect her, you would see that girl never could have made a trip in her life.'

'Now, Robert, what makes you so sad like, if you have no misgivings about her?'

'Because, mother, I don't think she likes me so well as I do her.'

'All the better,' said Mrs. Hathorn, drily, 'make up your mind to that.'

'Do not say so! do not say so!' said Robert, piteously.

'Well, Robert, she does not hate you, you may be sure of that. Why is she in such a hurry to go away?'

'Because she has some one in her own country she likes better than me.'

'Ay! that is the way you boys read women. More likely she is afraid of liking you too well, and making mischief in a family.'

'Oh, mother, do you think it is that?'

'There, I am a fool to tell you such things.'

'Oh, no, no, no! There is no friend like a mother.'

'There is no fool like a mother, that is my belief.'

'No, no! Give me some comfort, mother; tell me you see some signs of liking in her.'

'Well, then, when she is quite sure you are not looking her way, I can see her eye dwell upon you as if it was at home.'

'Oh, how happy you make me; but, mother, how you must have watched her?'

'Of course, I watched her, and you, too. I've seen a long while how matters were going.'

'But you never spoke to Rose, or my father?'

'If I had, she would have been turned out of the house, and a good job, too; but you would have fretted, you know,' and Mrs. Hathorn sighed.

'Mother, I must kiss you. I shall have courage to speak to father about it now.'

'Take a thought, Robert. His heart is set upon your marrying your cousin. It would be a bitter pill to the poor old man, and his temper is very hasty. For Heaven's sake, take a thought. I don't know what to do, I am sure.'

'I must do it soon or late,' said Robert, resolutely. 'No time so good as now. Father is hasty, and he will be angry no doubt; but after a while he will give in; I don't ask him favours every day. Do you consent, mother?'

'Oh, Robert, what is the use asking me whether I consent? I have only one son, and he is a good one. I am afraid I could not say no to your happiness, suppose it was my duty to say no;' but your father is not such a fool as I am, and I am main doubtful whether he will ever consent. I wish you could think better of it?'

'I will try him, mother, no later than to-day. Why, here he comes. Oh, there is Mr. Casenower with him; that is unlucky. You get him away, mother, and I 'll open my mind to father.'

Old Hathorn came past the window, and entered the room where Robert and Mrs. Hathorn were. The farmer stumped in, and sat down with some appearance of fatigue. Mr. Casenower sat down opposite him.

That gentleman had in his hand a cabbage. He

was proving to the farmer that this plant is more nutritious than the potato. The theory was German in the first instance. 'There are but three nourishing principles in all food,' argued Mr. Casenower, 'and of those what we call "fibrine," is the most effective. Now, see, I put my nail to this stalk, and it readily reduces itself to a bundle of little fibres; see, those are pure fibrine, and, taken into the stomach, make the man muscular. Can anything be clearer?'

Mr. Hathorn, who had shown symptoms of impatience, replied to this effect, 'That he knew by personal experience that cabbage turns to nothing but hot water in a man's belly.'

'There are words to come out of a man's mouth!' objected Mrs. Hathorn.

'Better than cabbage going into it,' grunted the farmer.

'Ah, you know nothing of chemistry, my good friend.'

'Well, sir, you say there is a deal of heart in a cabbage?'

'I do.'

'Then I tell you what I'll do with you, sir. There is some fool has been and planted half an acre of cabbages in my barley-field——'

'It was not a fool,' put in Mrs. Hathorn, sharply, 'it was me.'

'It was not a fool, you see, sir: it was a woman,

responded Hathorn, mighty drily. 'Well, sir, you train on the Dame's cabbages for a month, and all that time I'll eat nothing stronger than beef and bacon, and at the end of the month I 'll fight you for a pot of beer, if you are so minded.'

'This is the way we reason in the country, eh, Mr. Robert?'

'Yes, sir: it would serve father right if you took him up, sir, with his game leg; but I don't hold with cabbages for all that; a turnip is watery enough, but a cabbage and a sponge are pretty much one, it seems to me.'

'Mr. Casenower,' put in Mrs. Hathorn, 'didn't you promise to show me a pansey in your garden, that is to win the next prize at Wallingford?'

'I did, Ma'am, but you should not call it "Pansey;" "Heart's-ease" is bad enough, without going back to "Pansey." *Viola tricolor* is the name of the flower—the scientific name.'

'No,' said old Hathorn, stoutly.

'No! What do you mean by no?'

'What are names for? To remember things by; then the scientifickest name must be the one that it is easiest to remember. Now, pansey is a deal easier to remember than "vile tricolour."'

'I am at your service, Mrs. Hathorn; come along, for Heaven's sake;' and off bustled Mr. Casenower towards the garden with Mrs. Hathorn.

'Father,' said Robert, after an uneasy pause, 'I have something to say to you, very particular.'

'Have you though? well out with it, my lad!'

'Father!'—

At this moment, in bustled Mr. Casenower again. 'Oh, Mr. Robert, I forgot something. Let me tell you, now I think of it. I want you to find out this Rebecca Reid for me. She lives somewhere near, within a few miles. I don't exactly know how many. Can't you find her out?'

'Why, sir,' said Robert, 'it is like looking for one poppy in a field of standing wheat.'

'No, no! When you go to market, ask all the farmers from different parishes whether they know her.'

'Haw, haw, haw!' went Hathorn, senior. 'Yes, do, Robert. Ho, ho!'

'Have you any idea what he is laughing at?' said Mr. Casenower, drily.

'Father thinks you will make me the laughing-stock of the market, sir,' said Robert, with a faint smile; 'but never mind him, sir, I shall try and oblige you.'

'You are a good fellow, Robert. I must go back to Mrs. Hathorn,' and off he bustled again.

'Father,' began Robert; but before he could open his subject, voices were heard outside, and Mrs. Mayfield came in, followed by Richard Hickman.

'Tic! tic! tic!' said poor Robert, peevishly, for he foresaw endless interruptions.

Mr. Hickman had been for some minutes past employed in the agreeable occupation of bringing Mrs. Mayfield to the point; but, for various reasons, Mrs. Mayfield did not want to be brought to the point that forenoon. One of those reasons was, that although she liked Hickman well enough to marry him, she liked somebody else better, and she was not yet sure as to this person's intentions. She wanted, therefore, to be certain she could not have Paul, before she committed herself to Peter. Now, certain ladies when they do not want to be brought to the point, have ways of avoiding it that a man would hardly hit upon. One of them is, to be constantly moving about; for, they argue, 'if he can't pin my body to any spot, he can't pin my soul, for my soul is contained in my body,' and there is a certain vulgar philosophy in this. Another is, to be so absorbed in some small matter, that just then they cannot do justice to the larger question, and so modestly postpone it.

'Will I be yours till death us do part? now, how can I tell you just now? such a question demands at least some attention; and look at this hole in my lace-collar, which I am mending; if I don't give my whole soul to it, how can I mend it properly?'

Mr. Hickman had no sooner shown Mrs. Mayfield that he wanted to bring her to the point, than he found himself in for some hard work: twice he had to cross the farmyard with her: he had to take up a sickly

chicken and pronounce upon its ailment. He had to get some milk in a pail and give one of her calves a drink. He had to bring one cow from paddock to stall, and another from stall to paddock; and when all this and much more was done, the lady caught sight of our friends in the Hathorns' kitchen, and crying briskly, 'come this way,' led Mr. Hickman into company where she knew he could not press the inopportune topic.

'Curse her!' muttered the enamored one, as he followed her into the Hathorns' kitchen.

After the usual greetings, the farmer observing Robert's impatience, said to Hickman, 'If you will excuse me for a minute, farmer, Robert wants to speak to me; we are going towards the barn.' He then beckoned Mrs. Mayfield, and whispered in her ear, 'Don't let this one set you against my Robert that is worth a hundred of him.'

Mrs. Mayfield whispered in return, 'and don't let your Robert shilly-shally so, because this one does not —you understand.'

'All right,' replied Hathorn, 'ten to one if it is not you he wants to speak to me about.'

Hathorn and his son then sauntered into the farm-yard, and Hickman gained what he had been trying for so long, a quiet *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Mayfield—for all that, if a woman is one of those that have a wish, it is dangerous to *drive* her to the point.

'Well, Mrs. Mayfield,' said he, quietly but firmly, 'I am courting you this six months, and now I should be glad to have my answer. "Yes," or "no," if you please.'

Mrs. Mayfield sidled towards the window: it commanded the farmyard: Robert and his father were walking slowly up and down by the side of the farmyard pond. Mrs. Mayfield watched them intently, then half turning towards Hickman, she said slowly, 'Why as to that, Mr. Hickman, you have certainly come after me awhile, and I'll not deny I find you very good company; but I have been married once and made a great mistake, as you have heard I dare say; so now I am obliged to be cautious.'

'What, are you afraid of my temper, Rose? I am not reckoned a bad-tempered one, any more than yourself.'

'Oh, no! I have no fault to find with you—only we have not been acquainted so very long.'

'That is a fault will mend every day.'

'Of course it will; well, when you are settled on Bix, we shall see you mostly every day, and then we shall know one another better; for if you have no faults, I have; and then you will know better what sort of a bargain you are making; and then—we will see about it.'

'Better tell the truth,' said the all-observant Hickman.

'The truth!'

'Ay! that the old man wants you to marry Bob Hathorn—Oh! I am down upon him this many a day.'

'Robert Hathorn is nothing to me,' replied the Mayfield, 'but since you put him in my head, I confess I might do worse.'

'How could you do worse than marry a lad who has nothing but his two arms?'

Mrs. Mayfield looking slily through the window, observed Robert and his father to be in earnest conversation; this somewhat colored her answer. She replied quickly, 'Better poor and honest, than half rich and three parts of a rogue!'

'Is that for me, if you please?' said Hickman, calmly but firmly.

'No! I don't say it is,' replied the lady, fearful she had gone too far; 'but still I wonder at your choosing this time for pressing me.'

'Why not this time, as well as another, pray?' and Hickman eyed her intently, though secretly.

'Why not!' said she, and she paused; for the dialogue between Hathorn and his son was now so animated, that the father's tones reached even to her ear.

'Ay! why not?' repeated Hickman.

The lady turned on him, and with a sudden change of manner, said very sharply, 'Ask your own conscience.'

'I don't know what you mean!'

'I'll tell you. This old Patrick was miscalling you, when he fell ill. They say it was a stroke of the sun—

may be it was; but I should say passion had something to do with it too: the old man said words to you that none of the others noticed, but I did. He said as much as that you had robbed some one of what is before life in this world.'

'Ay, and what is before life, I wonder?' asked the satirical Hickman.

'Why, nothing,' replied the frank Mrs. Mayfield, 'if you go to that; but it is a common saying that a "good name is before life," and that is what the old man meant.'

'I wonder you should take any notice of what that old man says, and above all his daughter.'

'His daughter, Mr. Hickman! Why, I never mentioned his daughter, for my part. You have been and put your own bricks on my foundation.'

Hickman looked confused.

'You are a fool, Richard Hickman! You have told me more than I knew, and I see more than you tell me. You have led that girl astray, and deserted her likely, you little scamp!' (Hickman was five foot ten.)

'Nonsense!' put in Hickman. 'That Rachael shall never come between you and me; but I'll tell you who the girl stands between: you and your Robert, that the farmer wants to put in the traces with you against his will.'

'You are a liar!' cried Rose Mayfield, coloring to her temples.

Hickman answered coolly, 'Thank you for the compliment, Rose. No, it is the truth. You see, when a man is wrapped up in a woman, as I am in you, he finds out everything that concerns her; and your boy Tom tells me that Robert is as fond of her as a cow of a calf.'

'He fond of that Rachael! No!'

'Why, Rachael is a well-looking lass, if you go to that.'

'And so she is,' pondered Mrs. Mayfield; and in a moment many little circumstances in Robert's conduct became clear by this new light Hickman had given her. She struggled, and recovered her outward composure. 'Well,' said she, stoutly, 'what is it to me?'

'Why not much, I hope. Give me your hand, Rose; *I* don't fancy any girl but you. And name the day, if you will be so good.'

'No, no!' said Rose Mayfield, nearly crying with vexation. 'I won't marry any of you, a set of rogues and blockheads. And if it is true, I don't thank you for telling me. You are a sly, spiteful dog, and I don't care how often you ride past my house without hooking bridle to the gate, Dick Hickman.'

Hickman bit his lips, but he kept his temper. 'What! all this because Bob Hathorn's taste is not so good as mine! Ought I to suffer for his folly?'

'Oh, it is not for that, don't think it? But I don't want a lover that has ruined other women; it is not lucky, to say the least.'

'What, all this, because a girl jumped into my arms one day! Why, I am not so hard upon you. I hear tales about you, you know, but I only laugh—even about Frank Fairfield and you. (Mrs. Mayfield gave a little start.) Neither you nor I are angels, you know. Why should we be hard on one another?'

Mrs. Mayfield, red as fire, interrupted him. 'My faults, if I have any, have hurt me only; but yours never hurt you, and ruined others; and you say no more about me than you know, or you will get a slap in the mouth—and—there's my door; you take it at a word, and I'll excuse any further visits from *you*, Mr. Hickman.'

These words, with a finger pointing to the door, and a flashing eye, left nothing for Hickman but to retire, which he did boiling with indignation mortification and revenge. 'This is all along of Rachael. She has blown me,' muttered he between his teeth. 'I have got the bag; you shan't gain anything by it, Rachael!'

It will be remembered that when Patrick lay dying or dead, as supposed, this Hickman had a good impulse, and told Rachael he would never desert her: in this he was perfectly sincere at the moment. People utterly destitute of principle abound in impulses. They have good impulses, which come to nothing or next to nothing; and bad impulses, which they put in practice.

Mr. Hickman had time to think over his good

impulse, and, accordingly, he thought better of it, and found that Rose Mayfield was too great a prize to resign. He therefore kept out of the way more than a week, (a suspicious circumstance, which Mrs. Mayfield did not fail to couple with old Patrick's words), and his pity for Rachael evaporated in all that time. 'What the worse is she for me now? Hang her, I offered her money, and what not; but I suppose nothing will serve her turn but hooking me for life, or else having her spite out, and spilling my milk for me here.'

It was a fixed notion in this man's mind that Rachael would do all she could to ruin his suit with Mrs. Mayfield, and when he got the 'sack,' or, as he vulgarly called it, 'the bag,' he attributed it, in spite of Rose Mayfield's denial, to some secret revelation on Rachael's part, and a furious impulse to be revenged on her took possession of him.

Now this bad impulse, unlike his good one, had no time to cool. As he went towards the stable, in luck would have it he should meet Robert Hathorn. At sight of him our worthy acted upon his impulse. Robert, who was coming hastily from his father, with his brow knit and his countenance flushed, would have passed Hickman with the usual greeting, but Hickman would not let him off so easily.

'What, so you have got my old lass here still, Master Robert?'

'Your old lass! Not that I know of.'

'Rachael Wright, you know.'

'Rachael Wright, your lass!'

'Ay! and a very nice lass to, till we fell out. She gave me a broad hint just now, but I am for higher game. You could not lend me a spur, could you, Mr. Robert? Mine is broken.'

'No.'

'Never mind; good morning! good morning!'

Hickman's looks and contemptuous tones had eked out the few words with which he had stabbed Robert, and, together with the libertine character of the man, had effectually blackened Rachael in Robert's eyes.

This done, away went the poisoner, and chuckled as he went.

Robert Hathorn stood pale as death, looking after him. To this stupefaction succeeded a feeling of sickness, and a sense of despair, and Robert sat down upon the shaft of an empty cart, and gazed with stony eye upon the ground at his feet. His feelings were inexpressibly bitter. Where was he to hope to find a woman he could respect, if this paragon was a girl of loose conduct? Then came remorse: for this Rachael he had this moment all but quarrelled with his father —their first serious misunderstanding. After a fierce struggle with himself, he forced himself to see that she must be wrenched out of his heart. He rose, pale but stern, after a silent agony, that lasted a full hour,

though to him it seemed but a minute, and went and looked after his father. He found him in the barn watching the thrashers, but like one who did not see what he was looking at. His countenance was fallen and sad; the great and long-cherished wish of his heart had been shaken, and by his son; and then he had given that son bitter and angry words, and threatened him; and that son had answered respectfully, but firmly as iron, and the old man's heart began to sink.

He looked up and there was Robert, pale and stern, looking steadfastly at him with an expression he quite misunderstood. Old Hathorn lifted his head and said sharply and bitterly to his son,

'Well?'

'Father,' said Robert, in a languid voice, 'I am come to ask your pardon.'

Farmer Hathorn looked astonished. Robert went on.

'I'll marry any woman you like, father—they are all one to me now.'

'Why, what is the matter, Bob? that is too much the other way.'

'And if I said anything to vex you, forgive me father if *you* please.'

'No! no! no!' cried old Hathorn, 'no more about it, Bob; there was no one to blame but my hasty temper,—no more about it. Why, if the poor chap

nasn't taken it quite to heart, hasn't a morsel of colour left in his cheek!'

'Never mind my looks,' gasped Robert.

'And don't you mind my words either then. Robert, you have made me happier than I have been any time this twenty years!'

'I am glad of it,' faltered Robert. 'I'll look to this, if you have anything else to do.' He wanted to be alone.

'Thank you, Bob; I want to go into the village; keep up your heart, my lad. She is the best-looking woman I know, with the best heart *I* ever met, and I am older than you: and you see the worst of her the first day; her good part you are never at the bottom of; it is just the contrary with the sly ones. There, there! I'll say no more. Good bye.' And away went the old farmer, radiant.

'Be happy,' sobbed Robert; 'I am glad there is one happy.' And he sat down cold as a stone in his father's place. After awhile he rose, and walked listlessly about, till at last his feet carried him through habit into his father's kitchen; on entering it his whole frame took a sudden thrill, for he found Rachael there tying up her bundle for a journey. She had heard his step, and her head was turned away from the door; but near her was a small round, old-fashioned, mirror, and glancing into this Robert saw that tears were stealing down her face.

CHAPTER IV.

Old Hathorn paced down the village with his oak stick a happy man; but for all that he was a little mystified. But two hours ago Robert had told him he loved Rachael, and had asked his leave to marry her, and in answer to his angry, or to speak more correctly his violent refusal, had told him his heart was bound up in her, and he would rather die than marry any other woman. What could have worked such a sudden change in the young man's mind? 'May be I shall find out,' was his concluding reflection; and he was right; he did find out, and the information came from a most unexpected quarter. As he passed the village public-house he was hailed from the parlour window; he looked up, and at it was farmer Hickman, mug in hand. Now, to tell the truth, Hathorn was not averse to ale, especially at another man's expense, and, thought he, 'Farmer is getting beery, looks pretty red in the face; I'll see if I can't pump something out of him about him and Rose.' So he joined Hickman; and in about half an hour he also was redder in the face than nature intended.

If the wit is out when the wine is in, what must it be when the beer is in?

Old Hathorn and Hickman were much freer over

their glass than they had ever been before, and Hathorn pumped Hickman; but inasmuch as Hickman desired to be pumped, and was rather cunninger half drunk than sober, the old farmer drew out of him nothing about Rose, but he elicited an artful and villainous mixture of truth and falsehood about Rachael Wright; it was not a vague sketch like that with which he had destroyed Robert's happiness; it was a long circumstantial history, full of discolored truths and equivoques, and embellished with one or two good honest lies; but of these there were not many; poor Richard could not be honest even in dealing with the Devil: a great error; since that personage is not to be cheated; honesty is your only card in any little transaction with him. The symposium broke up. Hickman's horse was led round; he mounted, bade Hathorn good day, and went off. In passing the farm his red face turned black, and he shook his fist at it, and said,

'Fight it out now amongst ye.' And the poisoner cantered away.

In leading Robert Hathorn and others so far, we have shot ahead of some little matters which must not be left behind, since without them the general posture which things had reached when Robert found Rachael tying up her bundle could hardly be understood.

When Mrs. Mayfield gave Hickman 'the sack,' or, as that coarse young man called it, 'the bag,' she was

in a towering passion, and not being an angel, but a female with decided virtues and abominable faults, she was just now in anything but a Christian temper, and woe to all who met her.

The first adventurer was Mr. Casenower: he saw her at a distance, for she had come out of the house in which she found she could hardly breathe, and came towards her with a face all wreathed in smiles. Mr. Casenower had of late made many tenders of his affection to her, which she had parried by positively refusing to see anything more than a jest in them; but Casenower, who was perfectly good-humored and light-hearted, had taken no offence at this, nor would he consider this sort of thing a refusal; in short, he told her plainly that it gave him great pleasure to afford her merriment, even at his own expense; only he should not leave off hoping until she took his proposal into serious consideration; that done, and his fate seriously pronounced, he told her she should find he was too much of a gentleman not to respect a lady's will; only, when the final 'No,' was pronounced, he should leave the farm, since he could not remain in it and see its brightest attraction given to another. Here he caught her on the side of her good-nature, and she replied, 'Well, I am not anybody's yet.' She said to herself, 'the poor soul seems happy here, with his garden, and his farm of two acres, and his nonsense: and why drive the silly goose away before the time?'

So she suspended the final 'No,' and he continued to offer admiration, and she to laugh at it.

It must be owned moreover that she began, at times, to have a sort of humorous terror of this man. A woman knows by experience that it is the fate of a woman not to do what she would like, and to do just what she would rather not, and often, though apparently free, to be fettered by cobwebs, and driven into some unwelcome corner by whips of gossamer. One day Mesdames Hathorn and Mayfield had looked out of the parlour window into the garden, and there they saw Mr. Cas[illegible]wer, running wildly among the beds, with his hat in his hand.

'What is up now?' said Mrs. Mayfield, scornfully.

'I dare say it is a butterfly,' was the answer; 'he collects them.'

'What a fool he is!'

'He is a good soul for all that.'

'Fools mostly are—Jane!' said Mrs. Mayfield, very solemnly.

'Yes, Rose!'

'Look at that man; look at him well, if *you* please. Of all the men that pester me, that is the one that is the most ridiculous in my eye. Ha! ha! the butterfly has got safe over the wall, I'm so glad;—Jane!'

'Well!'

'You mark my word—I shan't have the butterfly's luck.'

'What do you mean?'

'That man is to be my husband!—that is all.'

'La, Rose, how can you talk so! you know he is the last man you will ever take.'

'Of course he is, and so he will take me; I feel he will; I can't bear the sight of him, so he is sure to be the man; you will see!—you will see!'—and casting on her cousin a look that was a marvellous compound of fun and bitterness, she left the room brusquely, with one savage glance flung over her shoulder into the garden.

I do not say that such mi[illegible]gs were frequent; this was once in a way; still it is characteristic, and the reader is entitled to it.

Mr. Casenower then came to Mrs. Mayfield and presented her a clove pink from his garden; he took off his hat with a flourish, and said, with an innocent, but somewhat silly playfulness, 'Accept this, fair lady, in token that some day you will accept the grower.'

The gracious lady replied by slapping the pink out of his hand, and saying, 'That is how I accept the pair.'

Mr. Casenower colored very high, and the water came into his eyes; but Mrs. Mayfield turned her back on him, and flounced into her own house. When there, she felt she had been harsh, and looking out of the window, she saw poor Casenower standing dejected on the spot where she had left him; she saw him stoop

and pick up the pink; he eyed it sorrowfully, placed it in his bosom, and then moved droopingly away.

'What a brute I am!' was the Mayfield's first reflection. 'I hate you!' was the second.

So then, being discontented with herself, she accumulated bitterness, and in this mood flounced into the garden, for she saw Mrs. Hathorn there. When she reached her, she found that her cousin was looking at Rachael, who was cutting spinach for dinner, while the old corporal, seated at some little distance, watched his grand-daughter; and as he watched her, his dim eye lighted every now and then with affection and intelligence.

Mrs. Mayfield did not look at the picture; all she saw was Rachael; and after a few trivial words, she said to Mrs. Hathorn in an under-tone, but loud enough to be heard by Rachael, 'Are these two going to live with us altogether?'

Mrs. Hathorn did not answer; she colored and cast a deprecating look at her cousin: Rachael rose from her knees and said to Patrick in an undertone, the exact counterpart of Mrs. Mayfield's: 'Grandfather, we have been here long enough, come—' and she led him into the house.

There is a dignity in silent unobtrusive sorrow, and some such dignity seemed to belong to this village girl Rachael, and to wait upon all she said or did; and this seemed to put everybody in the wrong who did or

said anything against her. When she led off her grandfather with those few firm sad words, in the utterance of which she betrayed no particle of anger or pique, Mrs. Hathorn cast a glance of timid reproach at her cousin, and she herself turned paler directly; but she replied to Mrs. Hathorn's look only by a disdainful toss of the head, and not choosing to talk upon the subject, she flounced in again and shut herself up in her own parlour—there she walked up and down like a little hyæna. Presently she caught sight of the old farmer, standing like a statue, near the very place where Robert had left him after announcing his love for Rachael and his determination to marry no other woman. At sight of the farmer, an idea struck Mrs. Mayfield—'that Hickman is a liar after all; don't let me be too hasty in believing all this about Robert and that girl. I'll draw the farmer.'

'I'll draw the farmer!' my refined reader is looking to me to explain the lady's phraseology. That which in country parlance is called 'drawing,' is also an art, oh, pencil—men that have lived thirty or forty years and done business in this wicked world, learn to practise it at odd times. Women have not to wait for that; it is born with most of them an instinct, not an art. It works thus: you suspect something, but you don't know: you catch some one who does know, and you talk to him as if you knew all about it. Then, if he is not quite on his guard, he lets out what you wanted to know.

Mrs. Mayfield walked up to Hathorn with a great appearance of unpremeditated wrath, and said to him, 'A fine fool you have been making of me, pretending your Robert looked my way, when he is over head and ears in love with that Rachael!'

'Oh!' cried the farmer, 'what the fool has been and told you too!'

'So it is true, then?' cried the Mayfield sharply.

Machiavel, No. 2, saw his mistake too late, and tried to hark back. 'No! he is not over head and ears; it is all nonsense and folly; it will pass: you set your back to mine, and we will soon bring the ninny to his senses.'

'I back you to force your son my way!' cried Rose in a fury: 'what do I care for your son or you either? —let him marry his Rachael! the donkey will find whether your mock-modest ones are better or worse than the frank ones—ha! ha!'

'Rose,' cried the farmer, illuminated with sudden hope; 'if you know anything against her, you tell me, and I'll tell Robert.'

'No!' said she, throwing up her nose into the air in a manner pretty to behold, 'I am no scandal-monger —it is your affair, not mine: let him marry his Rachael, ha! ha! oh!'—and off she went laughing with malice and choking with vexation.

There now remained to insult only Robert and Mrs. Hathorn. But the virago was afraid to scold Mrs.

Hathorn, who she knew would burst out crying at the first hard word, and then she would have to beg the poor soul's pardon; and Robert she could not find just then. Poor fellow, at this very moment he was writhing under Hickman's insinuations, and tearing his own heart to pieces in his efforts to tear Rachael from it.

So the Mayfield ran up stairs to her own bed-room and locked herself in, for she did not want sense, and she began to see and feel that she was hardly safe to be about.

Meantime Rachael had come to take leave of Mrs. Hathorn; that good lady remonstrated, but feebly; she felt that there would never be peace now till the poor girl was gone; but she insisted upon one thing; the old man in his weak state should not go on foot.

'You are free to go or stay for me, Rachael,' said she, 'but if you go, I will not have any harm come to the poor old man within ten miles of this door.'

So, to get away, Rachael consented to take a horse and cart of the farmer's, and this is how it came about that Robert found Rachael tying up her bundle of clothes. Her tears fell upon her little bundle as she tied it.

CHAPTER V.

ROBERT HATHORN had found in Hickman's insinuations a natural solution of all that had puzzled him in Rachael. She was the deserted mistress of a man whom she still loved—acting on this he apologised to his father, placed his future fate with heart-sick indifference in that father's hands, and despaired of the female sex, and resigned all hope of heart-happiness in this world. But all this time Rachael had been out of sight. She stood now before him in person, and the sight of her, beautiful, retiring, submissive, sorrowful, smote his heart and bewildered his mind. Looking at her, he could not see the possibility of this creature having ever been Hickman's mistress. He accused himself of having been too hasty; he would have given worlds to recall the words that had made his father so happy, and was even on the point of leaving the kitchen to do so; but on second thoughts he determined to try and learn from Rachael herself whether there was any truth in Hickman's scandal—and if there was, to think of her no more.

'What are you doing, Rachael?'

'I am tying up my things to go, Master Robert.'

'To go?'

'Yes! we have been a burden to your mother some

time; still, as I did the work of the house, I thought my grandfather would not be so very much in the way; but I got a plain hint from Mrs. Mayfield just now.'

'Confound her!'

'No, sir! we are not to forget months of kindness for a moment of ill-humor. So I am going, Mr. Robert, and now I have only to thank you for all your kindness and civility. We are very grateful, and wish we could make a return; but that is not in our power. But grandfather is an old man near his grave, and he shall pray for you by name every night, and so will I; so then, as we are very poor, and have no hopes but from Heaven, it is to be thought the Almighty will hear us and bless you sleeping and waking for being so good to the unfortunate.'

Robert hid his face in his hands a moment; this was the first time she had ever spoken to him so warmly and so sweetly, and at what a moment of dark suspicion had these words come to him. Robert recovered himself and said to Rachael, 'Are you sure that is the real cause of your leaving us so sudden?'

Rachael looked perplexed. 'Indeed, I think so, Mr. Robert. At least I should not have gone this very day but for that.'

'Ah! but you know very well you had made up your mind to go before that?'

'Of course I looked to go some day; we don't belong here, grandfather and I.'

'That is not it either. Rachael, there is an ill report sprung up about you.'

'What is that, sir?' said Rachael, with apparent coldness.

'What is it? How can I look in your face and say anything to wound you?'

'Thank you, Mr. Robert. I am glad there is one that is inclined to show me some respect.'

'Do something for me in return, dear Rachael; tell me your story, and I'll believe your way of telling it, not another's; but if you will tell me nothing, what can I do but believe the worst, impossible as it seems. Why are you so sorrowful? Why are you so cold like?

'I have nothing to tell you, Mr. Robert; if any one has maligned me, may Heaven forgive them; if you believe them, forget me. I am going away. Out of sight out of mind.'

'What! can a girl like you, that has won all our respects, go away and leave scandal behind her? No! stay, and face it out, and let us put it down for ever.'

'Why should I trouble myself to do that, sir?'

'Because if you do not, those who love you can love you no more.'

Rachael sighed, but she wrapped herself in coldness, and replied, 'But I want no one to love me.'

'You don't choose that any one should ever marry you, then?'

'No, Mr. Robert, I do not.'

'You would not answer Richard Hickman so!'

'Richard Hickman!' said Rachael, turning pale.

When she turned pale Robert turned sick.

'He says as much as that you could not say "No" to him.'

'Richard Hickman speaks of me to you!' cried Rachael, opening her eyes wildly. Then in a moment she was ice again. 'Well, I do not speak of him!'

'Rachael,' cried Robert, 'what is all this? For Heaven's sake, be frank with me. Don't make me tear the words out of you so; give me something to believe, or something to forgive. I should believe anything you told me: I am afraid I should forgive anything you had done.'

'I do not ask you to do either, sir.'

'She will drive me mad!' cried Robert frantically. 'Rachael, hear me. I love you more than a woman was ever loved before! You talk of being grateful to me. I don't know why you should, but you say so. If you are, be generous, be merciful. I leave it to you. Be my wife! and then, perhaps, you will not lock your heart and your story from your husband. I cannot believe ill of you. You may have been maligned, or you may have been deceived, but you cannot be guilty. There!' cried he, wildly, 'no word but one! Will you be my wife, Rachael?'

Rachael did not answer, at least in words; she wept silently.

Robert looked at her despairingly. At last he repeated his proposal almost fiercely, 'I ask you, Rachael, will you be my wife?'

As he repeated this question, who should stand in the doorway but Mrs. Mayfield. She was transfixed, petrified, at these words of Robert, but, being a proud woman, her impulse was to withdraw instantly, and hear no more. Ere she was out of hearing however, Rachael replied,

'Forgive me, Mr. Robert. I must refuse you!'

'You refuse to be my wife?'

'I do, sir!' but still she wept.

Mrs. Mayfield, as she retreated, heard the words, but did not see the tears. Robert saw the tears, but could not understand them. He gave a hasty, despairing gesture, to show Rachael that he had no more to say to her, and then he flung himself into a chair, and laid his brow on the table. Rachael glided softly away. At the door she looked back on Robert with her eyes thick with tears. She had hardly been gone a minute when Rose Mayfield returned, and came in and sat gently down opposite Robert, and watched him intently, with a countenance in which the most opposite feelings might be seen struggling for the mastery.

CHAPTER VI.

ROBERT lifted his head, and saw Mrs. Mayfield. He spoke to her sullenly. 'So you turn away our servants?'

'Not I,' replied Mrs. Mayfield sharply.

'It is not we that send away Rachael, it is you.'

'I tell you no; do you believe that girl before me?'

'You affronted her. What had she done to you?'

'I only just asked her, how long she meant to stay here, or something like that. Hang me if I remember what I said to her! They are a bad breed all these girls; haughty and spiteful; you can't say a word, but they snap your head off.' Mrs. Mayfield said no more, for at that moment Rachael came into the room with her grandfather and Mrs. Hathorn: this last appeared to be smoothing matters down.

'No, Daddy Patrick,' said she in answer to some observation of the old man's, 'nobody sends you away; you leave us good friends, and you are going to drink a cup of ale with us before you go.'

A tray was then brought in and a jug of ale, and Patrick drank his mug of ale slowly; but Rachael put hers to her lips and set it down again.

Then Robert went and sat on the window-seat and there he saw them bringing round the waggon to carry

away Rachael and her grandfather. His heart turned dead-sick within him. He looked round for help, and looking round he saw Mrs. Mayfield bending on him a look in which he seemed to read some compassion, blended with a good deal of pique. In his despair he appealed to her: 'There, they are really going; is it fair to send away like that folk that have behaved so well, and were minded to go of themselves only mother asked them to stay? See how that makes us look; and you that were always so kind-hearted, Mrs. Mayfield. Rose, dear Rose!'

Mrs. Mayfield did not answer Robert, whose appeal was made to her in an under-tone, but she said to Mrs. Hathorn: 'Jane, the house is yours; keep them if it suits you, I am sure it is no business of mine.'

'Oh, thank you Rose,' cried Robert; but his thanks were cut short by the voice of the elder Hathorn, who had just come in from the yard. 'They are going,' said he, 'I make no complaint against them. There is no ill-will on either side; but I say they ought to go, and go they shall.'

'Go they shall!' said the old corporal with a mystified look.

The farmer spoke with a firmness and severity, and even with a certain dignity, and all felt he was not in a mood to be trifled with. Robert answered humbly—

'Father, you are master here; no one gainsays you —but you are a just man. If you were to be cruel to

the poor and honest, you would be sorry for it all your days.'

Before the farmer could answer, Rose Mayfield put in hastily,

'There, bid them stay—you see your son holds to the girl, you will have to marry them one day or other, and so best—that will put an end to all the nonsense they talk about the boy and me. I dare say Robert is fool enough to think I wanted him for myself.'

'I—Mrs. Mayfield?—never.—What makes you fancy that?'

'And,' cried Mrs. Mayfield, as if a sudden light broke in upon her, 'what are we all doing here? we can't help folks' hearts.—Robert loves her. Are we to persecute Robert, an innocent lad, that never offended one of us, and has been a good son to you, and a good friend and brother to me ever since we could walk? I think the Devil must have got into my heart: but I shall turn him out, whether he likes, or no. I say he shall have the girl old man; and more than that, I have got a thousand pounds loose in Wallingford Bank; they shall have it to stock a farm; it is little enough to give Robert—I owe him more than that for Drayton, let alone years of love and good-will. There now, he is going to cry, I suppose.—Bob, don't cry for Heaven's sake; I can't abide to see a man cry.'

'It is you make me, Rose, praising me just when everybody seemed to turn against me.'

'You are crying yourself, Rose,' whimpered Mrs. Hathorn.

'If I am, I don't feel it,' replied Mrs. Mayfield.

Rachael trembled—but she said in her low firm voice, 'We are going away of our own accord, Mistress Mayfield, and we thank you kindly for this, and for all —but we are going away.'

'You don't love Robert, then?'

'No, Mrs. Mayfield,' said Rachael, with the air of one confessing theft or sacrilege, 'I don't love Mr. Robert!' and she lowered her eyes with their long lashes, and awaited her sentence.

'Tell that to the men,' replied Rose, 'you can't draw the wool over a sister's eye, young lady.'

'The young woman is the only one among you that has a grain of sense,' said old Hathorn roughly. 'Why don't you let her alone?—she would thank you for it.'

'Can you read a woman's words, you old ass?' was the contemptuous answer.

'I am not an ass young woman,' said Hathorn gravely and sternly, 'and I am in my house, which you seem to forget—' Rose colored up to the eyes— 'and I am the master of it, so long as it is your pleasure I should be here.'

'John!' cried Mrs. Mayfield, with a deprecating air.

'And I am that young man's father, and it is his

duty to listen to me, and mine not to let him make a fool of himself. I don't pretend to be so particular as Robert is—used to be, I mean—and I was telling him only yesterday, that, suppose you have kicked over the traces a bit, as you have never broken your knees, least-ways to our *knowledge*, Rose, it did not much matter.'

'Thank you, Daddy Hathorn, much obliged to you I am sure.'

'But there's reason in roasting of eggs: this one has been off the course altogether, and therefore I say again, she shows sense by going home, and you show no sense by trying to keep her here.'

'Father,' said Robert, 'you go too far; we know nothing against Rachael, and till I know I won't believe anything.'

'Why, Bob, I thought Hickman had told you all about it—I understood him so—ay, and he must too, or why did you come to me in the yard, and eat umble pie?'

'I don't know what you mean by telling me all about it, father: he hinted as much as that he and Rachael had been too familiar once upon a time.'

'Well?'

'Well! how often has he told me the same of a dozen others? that is a common trick of Dick Hickman's, to pretend he has been thick with a girl, that perhaps does not know his face from Adam's. Father,

I can't believe a known liar's tongue, against such a face as that.'

'Face as that! it is a comely one, but seems to me it does not look us so very straight in the face just now; and there's more than a liar's tongue on t'other side: there's chapter and verse as the saying is.'

'I don't understand your hints, and I don't believe that blackguard's. I am not so old as you, but I have learned that truth does not lie in hints.'

'I'm older than you, and a woman's face can't make me blind and deaf to better witnesses.'

'There are no better witnesses! For shame, father! Hickman is no authority with Hathorn.'

'But the Parish Register is an authority,' cried the old man sternly, and losing all his patience.

'The Parish Register?'

'And if you look at the Parish Register of Long Compton, you will find the name of a child she is the mother of and no father to show.'

'Father!'

'Ask herself!—you see she doesn't deny it.'

All eyes turned and fastened upon Rachael; and those who saw her at this moment will carry her face and her look to their graves, so fearful was the anguish of a high spirit ground into the dust and shame; her body seemed that moment to be pierced with a hundred

poisoned arrows. She rose white to her very lips, and stood in the midst of them quivering like an aspen-leaf, her eyes preternaturally bright and large, and she took one uncertain step forwards, as if to fling herself on the weapons of scorn that seemed to hem her in; and she opened her mouth to speak, but her open lips trembled, and trembled, and no sound came. And all the hearts round, even the old farmer's, began now to freeze and fear at the sight of this wild agony; and at last, after many efforts, the poor soul would have said something, God knows what, but a sudden and most unexpected interruption came. Corporal Patrick was by her side, nobody saw how, and seizing her firmly by the arm, he forbade her to speak.

'Silence, girl!' cried the old soldier fiercely. 'I dare you to say a word to any of them.'

Then Rachael turned and clung convulsively to his shoulder, and trembled and writhed there in silence. All this while they had not observed the old man, or they would have seen that the mist had gradually cleared away from his faculties; his mind brightened by his deep love for Rachael was keenly awake to all that concerned her; and so her old champion stood in a moment by her side with scarce a sign left of age or weakness, upright and firm as a tower.

'Silence, girl! I dare you to say a word to any of them.'

'There,' sobbed Mrs. Hathorn, 'you thought the

poor old man was past understanding, and now you make him drink the bitter cup as well as her.'

'Yes! I must drink my cup too,' said Old Patrick. 'I thought I was going to die soon, and to die in peace; but I'll live and be young again, if it is but to tell ye, ye are a pack of curs. The Parish Register! does the Parish Register tell you, the man married her with a wife living in another part? Is it wrote down along with that child's name in the Parish Register, how his father fell on his knees to his mother a girl of seventeen, and begged for the dear life she wouldn't take the law of him and banish him the country? What was she to think? could she think, that when his sick wife died, he'd reward her for sparing him by flying the country not to do her right? The Parish Register! You welcome this scoundrel to your house, and you hunt his victim out like a vagabond, ye d——d hypocrites. Come Rachael, let us crawl away home, and die in peace.'

'No, no! you must not go like that,' cried Mrs. Hathorn, and Robert rose and was coming to take his hand; but he waived his staff furiously over his head.

'Keep aloof, I bid ye all, he cried; 'I have fought against Buonaparte, and I despise *small* blackguards.' He seized Rachael and drew her to the door: then he came back at them again—'Tis n't guilt you have punished; you have insulted innocence and hard fortune; you have insulted your own mothers, for you

have insulted me that fought for them before the best and oldest of you was born—no sculking before the enemy, girl'—for Rachael was drooping and trembling—'right shoulders forward—MARCH!' and he almost tore her out of the house. He was great, and thundering, and terrible in this moment of fury; he seemed a giant and the rest but two feet high. His white hair streamed, and his eyes blazed defiance and scorn. He was great and terrible by his passion and his age, and his confused sense of past battles and present insult. They followed him out almost on tip-toe. He lifted Rachael into the waggon, placed her carefully on a truss of hay in the waggon, and the carter came to the horses' heads, and looked to the house to know whether he was to start now.

Robert came out and went to Rachael's side of the waggon, but she turned her head away.

'Won't you speak to me, Rachael?' said Robert.

Rachael turned her head away and was silent.

'Very well,' said Robert quietly, very quietly.

'Go on,' cried old Hathorn.

The next moment there was a fearful scream from the women, and Robert was seen down among the horses' feet, and the carter was forcing them back, or the waggon would have been over him; the carter dragged him up—he was not hurt, but very pale; he told his mother, who came running to him, that he had felt suddenly faint and had fallen, and he gave a

sickly smile and bade her not be frightened—he was better.

Rose Mayfield was as white as a sheet.

'Go on,' cried the farmer again, and at a word from the carter the horses drew the waggon out of the yard, and went away down the lane with Rachael and Patrick.

They were gone.

CHAPTER VII.

CORPORAL PATRICK was correct in his details; the Parish Register gave a very vague outline of Rachael Wright's history. Mr. Hickman had gone through the ceremony of marrying her; nay more, at the time he had firmly intended the ceremony should be binding, for his wife lay dying a hundred miles off, and Rachael had at this period great expectations from her aunt, Mrs. Clayton. This Mrs. Clayton was the possessor of Bix Farm. She was a queer-tempered woman, and a severe economist; this did not prevent her allowing Patrick and Rachael a yearly sum, which helped to maintain them in homely comfort. And she used to throw out mysterious hints that, at her death, the pair would be better off than other relations of hers who dressed finer and held their heads higher at present. Unfortunately for Rachael this aunt was alive at the period when Hickman's bigamy was discovered by old

Patrick. The said aunt had never done anything of the kind herself, nobody had ever married her illegally, and she could not conceive how such a thing could take place without the woman being in fault as well as the man; so she was very cross about it, and discontinued her good offices. The Corporal wished to apply the law at once to Hickman; but he found means to disarm Rachael, and Rachael disarmed the old soldier. Rachael, young, inexperienced, and honest, was easily induced to believe in Hickman's penitence, and she never doubted that upon his wife's death, who was known to be incurably ill, Richard would do her ample right. So meantime she agreed to do herself injustice.

Mrs. Hickman died within a short time of the exposure; but unfortunately for Rachael, another person died a week or two before her, and that person was Rachael's aunt. No will appeared, except an old one which was duly cancelled by the old lady herself, in the following manner:—First, all the words were inked out with a pen; secondly, most of them were scratched out with a knife; lastly, a formal document was affixed and witnessed, rendering the said instrument null as well as illegible. The mutilated testament bequeathed Bix Farm to Jack White, her graceless nephew. He had offended her after the will was made, so she annulled the will. The graceless nephew could afford to smile at these evidences of wrath; he happened

to be her heir-at-law, and succeeded to Bix in the absence of all testament to the contrary. Hickman was with his dying wife in Somersetshire. The news about Bix reached him, and he secretly resolved to have nothing more to do with Rachael. To carry out this with more security, the wretch wrote her affectionate letters from time to time, giving plausible excuses for remaining in Somersetshire; and so he carried on the game for three months after his wife was dead; he then quietly dropped the mask and wrote no more.

So matters went on for some years, until one day the graceless nephew finding work a bore, announced Bix Farm to let. Poor Hickman had set his heart upon this Bix, and as he could not have it for his own, he thought he should like to rent it, so he came up and made his offer, and was accepted as tenant. The rest the reader knows, I believe; but what iron passed through the hearts of Rachael and the old soldier all this time, that let me hope he knows not.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE events we have recorded had no sooner taken place, than a great change seemed to come over Mrs. Mayfield. She went about her avocations as usual, but not with the same alacrity; and her spirits were so unstrung, that every now and then she burst into tears. The female servants, honest country wenches that were not sublimely indifferent, like London domestics, to everybody in the house but themselves, seeing the gloom of the house, and Mrs. Mayfield continually crying who never cried before, began to whimper for sympathy, and the house was a changed house. Robert had disappeared; and they all felt it was a charity not to ask where, or to go near him for a while: all but the mother, who could not resist the yearnings of a mother's nature; she crept silently at a distance, and watched her boy, lest perchance evil should befall him.

Mrs. Mayfield then, after many efforts to go through her usual duties, gave way altogether, and sat herself down in her own parlour, and cried over all the sorrow that had come on the farm; and, as all generous natures do, if you give them time to think, she blamed herself more than any one else, and wished herself dead and out of the way, if by that means the rest could only be

made happy as they used to be. While she was in this mood, her head buried in her hands, she heard a slight noise, and, looking up, saw a sorrowful face at the door: it was Mr. Casenower.

'I am come to bid you good-bye, Mrs. Mayfield.

'Come to bid me good-bye?'

'Yes. All my things are packed up except this, which I hope you will do me the favour to accept, since I am going away and shall never tease you again.'

'You never teased me that I know,' said Mrs. Mayfield, very gently. 'What is it, sir?'

'It is my collection of birds' eggs: will you look at it?'

'Yes. Why, here are a hundred different sorts, and no two kinds alike.'

'No two kinds? I should think not. No two eggs, you mean.'

'How beautiful they look when you see them in such numbers!'

'They are beautiful. Nature is very skilful; we don't take half as many hints from her as we might. Do you observe these eggs all of one colour—these delicate blues—these exquisite drabs? If you ever wish to paint a room, take one of these eggs for a model, and you will arrive at such tints as no painter ever imagined out of his own head, I know. I once hoped we should make these experiments together; but it was not to be. Good-bye, dear Mrs. Mayfield!'

'Oh! Mr. Casenower, I did not think you came to quarrel with me.'

'Heaven forbid! But you love somebody else.'

'No: I don't.'

'Yes: you know you do; and you rejected me this morning.'

'I remember I was rude to you, sir; I knocked a flower out of your hand. Does that rankle in your heart so long?'

'Mrs. Mayfield, it is for your sake I am going, not out of anger; you know that very well.'

'I know no such thing: it is out of spite; and a pretty time to show your spite, when my heart is breaking. If you want to please me, you would wait till I bid you go.'

'You don't bid me go, then?'

'It doesn't seem like it.'

'You bid me stay?'

'Not I, sir. Don't let me keep you here against your will.'

'But it is not against my will; only you seemed to hate me this morning.'

'What signifies what I did this morning?' cried Mrs. Mayfield, sharply, 'it is afternoon now. This morning they put me out; I wanted somebody to quarrel with; you came in my way, so I quarrelled with you. Now I have made you all unhappy, so I am miserable myself, as I deserve; and now I want somebody to comfort me,

and you come to me: but instead of comforting me, all you can think of is to quarrel with me—oh! oh! oh!' This speech was followed by a flood of tears.

Casenower drew his chair close to hers, and took her hand, and promised to console her—to die for her, if necessary.

'Tell me your trouble,' said he, 'and you shall see how soon I will cure it, if a friend can cure it. Mrs. Mayfield—Rose—what is the matter?'

'Dear Mr. Casenower, Robert is in love with that Rachael—the farmer has insulted her, and sent her and her grandfather away—Robert is breaking his heart;—and all this began with a word of mine, though that blackguard Hickman is more to blame still. But I am a woman that likes to make people happy about me; I may say I live for that; and now they are all unhappy; and if I knew where to find a dose of poison, I would not be long before I would take it this day. I can't bear to make folk unhappy—oh! oh! oh!'

'Don't cry, dearest,' said Casenower; 'you shall have your wish; you shall make everybody happy!'

'Oh, no, no! that is impossible now.'

'No such thing—there is no mischief that can't be cured—look here, Rose, the old farmer is very fond of money; Rachael is poor; well, I am rich. I will soon find Robert a thousand pounds or two, and he shall have the girl he likes.'

'Ah, Mr. Casenower, if money could do it I should

have settled it that way myself. Oh! what a good creature you are. I love you—no, I don't, I hate you, because I see how all this is to end. No, no! we have insulted the poor things and set their hearts against us, and we have set poor Robert against the girl, who is worth the whole pack of us twice counted. They are gone, and the old man's curse hangs like lead upon the house and all in it.'

'Where are they gone?'

'Newbury way.'

'How long?'

'An hour and a half.'

'In two hours I'll have them back here.'

'Don't be a fool now, talking nonsense.'

'Will you lend me your mare?'

'Yes! no! The old farmer would kill us.'

'Hang the old farmer! Who cares for him? Is this your house or his?'

'Mine to be sure.'

'Then I shall bring them to this house.'

'Yes, but—but—'

'You have a right to do what you like in your own house, I suppose. Why, how scared you look! Where is all your spirit? You have plenty of it sometimes.'

'Dear Mr. Casenower—don't tell anybody—I have not a grain of real spirit. I am the most chicken-hearted creature in the world: only I hide it when I fall in with other cowards, and so then I can bully

them, you know. I have Hectored it over you more than once, and so I would again; but it would be a shame, you are so good—and besides you have found me out now.'

'Well! I am not afraid of anybody, if I can please you. I will ride after them and fetch them here, and if you are afraid to give them house-room, I will hire that empty house at the end of the lane, and this very night they shall be seated in a good house, by a good fire, before a good supper, within fifty yards of your door.'

'Let me go with you. You don't know the way.'

'Thank you; I should be sure to lose the way by myself; go and get your habit on. Lose no time. I will saddle the horses.'

'How a man takes the command of us,' thought Mrs. Mayfield. 'I shall have to marry you for this, I suppose,' said she, gaily, shining through her late tears.

'Not unless you like,' said Casenower, proudly. 'I don't want to entrap you, or take any woman against her will.'

The Mayfield colored up to her eyes.

'You had better knock me down,' said she. 'I know you would like to,' and, casting on her companion a glance of undisguised admiration, she darted upstairs for her habit.

Ten minutes later she was in the saddle, and giving

her mare the rein, she went after our poor travellers like a flash of lightning.

Casenower followed as he might.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a glorious evening: the sun, gigantic and red, had just begun to tip the clouds with gold, and rubies, and promises of a fine day to-morrow; the farm was quiet; the farmer's homely supper was set on a table outside the door, and he and his wife sat opposite each other in silence.

Mrs. Hathorn helped herself to a morsel; but she did not care to eat it, and, in fact, she only helped herself to encourage her husband to eat. She did not succeed; Farmer Hathorn remained in a brown study, his supper untasted before him.

'Eat your supper, husband.'

'Thank you, wife; I am not hungry.'

'Take a drop of beer, then.'

'No, Jane, I am not dry.'

'You are ill then, John; you don't look well.'

'I'm well enough, I tell you.'

'You are in trouble, like many more in this house.'

'Me? No: I never was happier in my life!'

'Indeed! What is there to be happy about?'

'Come, now, what is it?' cried the farmer, angrily.

'Out with it, and don't sit looking at me with eyes like a adder's.'

'My man, you see your conscience in your wife's eyes; that is all the venom they have.'

'You had better tell me Robert is in his senses to love that girl. I would cut my arm off at the shoulder sooner than consent to it.'

'Would you cut your son off sooner?' said Mrs. Hathorn, with forced calmness.

'What do you mean?'

'You take very little notice of what passes, John.'

'What do you mean?'

'Didn't you see what Robert tried for when the waggon started with them?'

'Oh, about his fainting! I could have kicked the silly fool if I hadn't been his father.'

'Don't you think it is very odd he should faint like that; just under the wheel of a waggon?'

'Oh! when a chap swoons away he can't choose the bed he falls on.'

'A moment more the wheel would have been on his head; if Thomas hadn't been lightsome* and stopped the horses all in a minute, Robert Hathorn would have been a corpse in this house.'

'Well!'

'Well!'

* Pronounced lissome.

The man lowered his voice: 'You had better tell me you think he did it on purpose!'

Mrs. Hathorn leaned over the table to him.

'I don't think it, John; I am sure of it. Robert never fainted at all; he was as white as his shirt, but he knew what he was about from first to last. He chose his time; and when Rachael turned her head from him, he just said, "Very well, then," and flung himself under the wheel. What did Thomas say, who dragged him up from the horses' feet?'

'I don't know,' said old Hathorn, half sulkily, half trembling.

'He said, "That is flying in the face of Heaven, young master." Jane heard him say it; and you know Thomas is a man that speaks but little. What did Rose Mayfield say, as she passed him next minute? "Would you kill your mother, Robert, and break all our hearts?" You cried out, "Go on—go on." Robert said his foot had slipped; and made as though he would smile at me. Ah! what a smile, John! If you had been as near it as I was, you wouldn't sleep this night.' And Mrs. Hathorn began to sob violently, and rocked herself to and fro.

'Then send for them back,' cried the farmer, suddenly starting up. 'Send, before worse ill comes—confound them!'

'They will never come back here. They are poor, but honest and proud; and we have stung

them too bitterly, reproaching them with their hard lot.'

'Where is he?' whispered the farmer.

'In the barn; with his face buried in the straw, like one who wouldn't speak, or see, or hear the world again.'

'Mayhap he is asleep?'

'No, he is not asleep.'

'Give him time; he'll come to when he has cried his bellyful.'

'He shed tears? Oh, no! it is too deep for that; he will die by his own hand, or fret to death. He won't be long here, I doubt: look for dark days, old man!'

'Wife,' said Hathorn, trembling, 'you are very hard upon me: to hear you, one would say I am a bad father, and am killing my son.'

'No—no—John! But we were too ambitious, and we have humbled the poor and the afflicted; and Heaven does not bless them that do so, and never will.'

'I don't know what to do, Jane.'

'No more do I, except pray to God: that is my resource in dangers and troubles.'

'Ay! ay! that can do no harm any way.'

While the old couple sat there, with gloomy and foreboding hearts, suddenly a cheerful cry burst upon their ears. It was Mrs. Mayfield's voice; she came cantering up the lane with Mr. Casenower; she dismounted, flung him the bridle, and ran into her own house; where she busied herself in giving orders and

preparing two rooms for some expected visitors. A few minutes more, and, to the astonishment of Hathorn and delight of his wife, the waggon hove in sight with Rachael and Patrick.

They descended from the waggon, and were led by Mr. Casenower into Mrs. Mayfield's house, and there, after all this day's fatigues and sorrows, they found a welcome and bodily repose. But Rachael showed great uneasiness; she had been very reluctant to return; but Mrs. Mayfield had begged them both so hard, with the tears in her eyes, and Patrick had shown so strong a wish to come back, that she had yielded a passive consent. When the news of their return was brought to Robert by his mother, he betrayed himself to her; he threw his arms around her neck like a girl—but in his downcast look, and dogged manner, none of the others could discover whether he was glad or sorry. He went about his work, next morning, as usual, and did not even make an inquiry about Rachael.

It was about twelve o'clock the next day, that Mrs. Mayfield observed him return from the field, and linger longer than usual in the neighbourhood of the house. She invited Rachael to come and look at her pet calf, and walked her most treacherously right up to Robert.

'Oh!' cried she, 'you must excuse me, here is Robert, he will do as well. Robert, you take and show her my calf, the red and white one, that's a good soul,

they want me in-doors.' And in a moment she was gone, and left Robert and Rachael looking alternately at each other and the ground.

When Rose left these two together, she thought, innocently enough, that the business was half done, as far as they were concerned. She had not calculated the characters of the parties, and their pride. They were little nearer each other now than at twenty miles distant.

'Well, Rachael,' said Robert, 'I am glad you are here again; they were wrong to insult you, and now they are right to bring you back; but it is no business of mine.'

'No, Master Robert,' said Rachael quietly, 'and it is against my will I am here.'

With these words she was moving away, when Robert intercepted her, and, intercepting her, said, 'Oh! I don't hinder you to stay or to go. The folk say a heap of things about you and me; but did I ever say a word to you more than civility?'

'No! nor would I have suffered it.'

'Oh! you are proud; it suits your situation,' said Robert, bitterly.

'A man and a Christian would think twice ere he reminded me of my situation,' cried Rachael, with flashing eyes, 'and since you can't feel for it, why speak to me at all?'

'I did not mean to affront you,' said Robert, with feeling. 'I pity you.'

'Keep your pity for one that asks it,' was the spirited reply.

'What! are we to worship you?'

'Misfortune that does not complain should meet some little respect, I think.'

'Yes, Rachael, but it would be more respected if you had not kept it so close.'

'Master Robert,' answered Rachael, in what we have already described as her dogged manner, 'poor folk must work, and ought to work; and as they won't let a girl in my situation, as you call it, do work or be honest, I concealed my fault—if fault it was of mine.'

'And I call it cruel to let a man love you, and hide your story from him.'

'Nay, but I never encouraged any man to love me; so I owe my story to no man."

'Keep your secrets, then,' said Robert savagely, 'nobody wants them, without it is Richard Hickman. I hear his cursed voice in the air somewhere.'

'Richard Hickman;' gasped Rachael. 'Oh! why did I come to this place to be tortured again?'

Richard Hickman had come here expressly to have a friendly talk with Mr. Patrick. Mr. Patrick owed this honor to the following circumstance:—

As the waggon returned to the farm, Thomas had stopped at a certain way-side public-house, in which Mr. Hickman happened to be boozing. Patrick was

breathing threats against Hickman, and insisting on Rachael's taking the law of him, and sending him out of the country. Rachael, to get rid of the subject, yielded a languid assent; and Hickman, who was intently listening, trembled in his shoes. To prevent this calamity, the prudent Richard determined to make a pseudo-spontaneous offer of some sort to the Corporal and hush up the whole affair.

At sight of Hickman, the Corporal was for laying on, as our elder-dramatists have it; but Mr. Casenower, who was there, arrested his arm, and proposed to him to hear what the man had to say.

'Well,' cried Patrick, 'let him speak out then before them all—they have all seen us affronted through his villainy. Where is Rachael?'

So then the Corporal came round to where Rachael stood, pale as death; and Robert sat pale, too, but clenching his teeth like one who would die sooner than utter a cry; though many vultures, called passions, were gnawing the poor lad's heart at this moment; and to make matters worse, both Mr. and Mrs. Hathorn, seeing this assemblage, were drawn by a natural curiosity to join the group.

And here Mr. Hickman's brass enabled him to cut a more brilliant figure than his past conduct justified; he cast a sly satirical look at them, especially at poor Robert, and, setting his back to the railings, he opened the ball thus:—

'I come to speak to Mrs. Mayfield; she says, "Speak before all the rest." With all my heart. I come to say three words to Mr. Patrick, "Speak before all the rest," says he; well, why not? it is a matter of taste. Mr. Patrick, I have done you wrong, and I own it; but you have had your revenge. You have told the story your way, and the very boys are for throwing stones at me here, and you have set Mrs. Mayfield against me, that used to look at me as a cat does at cream.'

'As a cat does at water, you mean—you impudent ugly dog.'

'Keep your temper, my darling: you were for having everything said in public, you know. Well, now let us two make matters smooth, old man. How much will you take to keep your tongue between your teeth after this?'

Patrick's reply came in form of a question addressed to the company in general.

'Friends, since Corporal Patrick of the 47th Foot was ill amongst you, and partly out of his senses, has he done any dirty action that this fellow comes and offers him money in exchange for good name?'

'No, Mr. Patrick,' said Robert, breaking silence for the first time. 'You are an honest man, and a better man than ever stood in Dick Hickman's shoes.'

Hickman bit his lip, and cast a wicked glance at Robert.

'And your daughter is as modest a lass as ever broke bread, for all her misfortunes,' cried Mrs. Hathorn.

'And none but a scoundrel would hope to cure the mischief he has done with money,' cried the Mayfield.

'Spare me good people,' said Hickman, ironically.

'Ay, spare him,' said Patrick, simply. 'I have spared him this five years for Rachael's sake; but my patience is run out,' roared the old man, and, lifting his staff, he made a sudden rush at the brazen Hickman. Casenower and Old Hathorn interposed.

'Let him alone,' said Hickman, 'you may be sure I shan't lift my hand against four-score years. I'll go sooner,' and he began to saunter off.

'What! you are a coward as well, are you?' roared Patrick. 'Then I pity you. Begone, ye lump of dirt, with your idleness, your pride, your meanness, your money, and the shame of having offered it to a soldier like me that has seen danger and glory.'

'Well done, Mr. Patrick,' cried Hathorn, 'that is an honour to a poor man to be able to talk like that.'

'Yes, Mr. Patrick, that was well said.'

'It is well said, and well done.'

Every eye was now bent with admiration on Patrick, and from him they turned with an universal movement of disdain to Hickman. The man writhed for a moment under this human lightning difficult to resist, and then it was he formed a sudden resolution that took all

present by surprise. Conscience pricked him a little, Rachael's coldness piqued him, jealousy of Robert stung him, general disdain annoyed him, and he longed to turn the tables on them all. Under this strange medley of feelings and motives, he suddenly wheeled round, and faced them all, with an air of defiance that made him look much handsomer than they had seen him yet, and he marched into the middle of them.

'I'll show you all I am not so bad as you make me out—you listen, old man—Rachael, you say that you love me still, and that 't is for my sake you refuse Bob Hathorn, as I believe it is, and the devil take me if I won't marry you now, for all that is come and gone.' He then walked slowly and triumphantly past Robert Hathorn, looking down on him with superior scorn, and he came close up to Rachael, who was observed to tremble as he came near her. 'Well, Rachael, my lass, I am Richard Hickman, and I offer you the ring before these witnesses—say yes, and you are mistress of Bix Farm—and Mrs. Hickman. Oh! I know the girl I make the offer to,' added he, maliciously, 'if you could not find out what she is worth, I could. Where are you all now?—name the day Rachael, here is the man.'

Rachael made no answer.

It was a strange situation, so strange that a dead silence followed Hickman's words. Marriage offered to a woman before a man's face who had tried to kill

himself for her but yesterday, and offered by a man who had neglected her entirely for five years, and had declined her under more favourable circumstances. Then the motionless silence of the woman so addressed —they all hung upon her lips, poor Mr. Casenower not excepted, who feared that, now Rachael was to be Mrs. Hickman, Robert might turn to Mrs. Mayfield and crush his new raised hopes.

As for Robert, he did everything he could to make Rachael say 'Yes' to Hickman. He called up a dogged look of indifference, and held it on his face by main force. It is to be doubted, though, whether this imposed on Rachael. She stole a single glance at him under her long lashes, and at last her voice broke softly, but firmly, on them all, and it sounded like a bell, so hushed were they all, and so highly strung was their attention and expectation.

'I thank you, Richard Hickman, but I decline your offer.'

'Are you in earnest, little girl?'

'Rachael,' said Patrick, 'think—are you sure you know your own mind?'

'Grandfather, to marry a man I must swear in the face of heaven to love and honor him. How could I respect Richard Hickman? if he was the only man left upon the earth, I could not marry him and I would not. I would rather die!'

Robert drew a long breath.

'You have got your answer,' said Patrick, 'so now, if I was you, I'd be off.'

'If I don't I'm a fool. I shall go to my uncle: he lives ninety miles from here, and you'll see I shall get a farm there and a wife and all—if so be you don't come there a reaping, Mr. Patrick.'

'Heaven pardon you then,' said the old man gravely. 'You are but young; remember it is not too late to repair your ill conduct to us by good conduct to others —so now good aaternoon.'

'Good aaternoon, Daddy Patrick,' said Hickman, with sudden humility. 'Your servant, all the company,' added he, taking off his hat. So saying, he went off. He had no sooner turned the corner than he repented him of the manner of his going; so, putting his hands in his pockets, he whistled the first verse of 'The Plough-boy,' until out of hearing. As these last sounds of Hickman died away they all looked at one another in silence. Old Hathorn was the first to speak.

'That was uncommon spirity to refuse Hickman,' said he, bluntly, 'but you have too much pride, both of you!'

'No, not I, farmer,' said the old man, sorrowfully, 'I have been proud, and high-spirited too; but it is time that passed away from me. I am old enough to see from this world into another, and from this hour to my last (and that won't be long, I hope), I am patient;

the sky is above the earth; my child has had wrong—cruel, bitter, undeserved wrong; but we will wait for Heaven's justice, since man has none for us: and we will take it when it comes, here, or hereafter.'

The fiery old man's drooping words brought the water into all their eyes, and Robert, in whose mind so sore a struggle had been raging, sprang to his feet.

'You speak well,' he cried, 'you are a righteous man, and my ill pride falls before your words; it is my turn to ask your daughter of you. Rachael, you take me for husband and friend for life. I loved you well enough to die for you, and now I love you well enough to live for you; Rachael, be my wife—if *you* please.'

'She won't say "No!" this time,' cried Rose Mayfield, archly.

'Thank you, Robert,' said Rachael, mournfully. 'I am more your friend than to say "Yes."'

'Rachael,' cried Mrs. Hathorn, 'if it is on our account, I never saw a lass I would like so well for daughter-in-law as yourself.'

'No, mother,' said Robert; 'it is on account of father. Father, if you will not be offended, I shall put a question to you that I never thought to put to my father. Have I been a good son or a bad son to you these eight-and-twenty years?'

'Robert!' cried the old man in a quivering tone, that showed these simple words had gone through and through his heart. Then he turned to Rachael: 'My

girl, I admire your pride; but have pity on my poor boy and me.'

'And on yourself,' put in Mrs. Mayfield.

'May Heaven bless you, Mr. Hathorn!' said Rachael. 'If I say "No!" to Robert, I have a reason that need offend no one. Folk would never believe I was not in fault; they would cast his wife's story in his teeth, and sting us both to death; for he is proud, and I am proud too. And what I have gone through—oh! it has made me as bitter as gall—as bitter as gall!'

'Rachael Wright,' cried the old Corporal, sternly, 'listen to me!'

'Rachael Wright,' yelled Casenower. 'Oh! gracious heavens—Rachael Wright—it is—it must be. I knew it was an odd combination—I got it into my head it was "Rebecca Reid"—is this Rachael Wright, sir?'

'Of course it is,' said the Corporal, peevishly.

'Then I have got something for her from my late partners. I'll find it—it is at the bottom of my seeds,' and away scampered Casenower.

He presently returned, and interrupted a rebuke Mr. Patrick was administering to Rachael, by giving her a long envelope. She opened it with some surprise, and ran her eye over it, for she was what they call in the county a capital scholar. Now as she read, her face changed and changed like an April sky, and each change was a picture and a story. They looked at her

in wonder as well as curiosity. At last a lovely red mantled in her pale cheek, and a smile like a rainbow, a smile those present had never seen on her face, came back to her from the past. The paper dropped from her hands as she stretched them out, like some benign goddess or nymph, all love, delicacy, and grace.

'Robert,' she cried, and she need have said no more, for the little word 'Robert,' as she said it, was a volume of love, 'Robert, I love, I always loved you. I am happy—happy—happy!' and she threw her arm round Robert's neck, and cried and sobbed, and, crying and sobbing, told him again and again how happy she was.

'Hallo!' cried Hathorn, cheerfully, 'wind has shifted in your favor, appearently, Bob.'

Mrs. Mayfield picked up the paper. 'This has done it,' cried she, and she read it out *pro bono*. The paper contained the copy of a will made by Rachael's aunt, a year before she died. The sour old lady, being wrath with Rachael on account of her misconduct in getting victimized, but not quite so wrath as with her graceless nephew, had taken a medium course. She had not destroyed this will, as she did the other by which graceless nephew was to benefit, but she hid it in the wall, safe as ever magpie hid thimble, and dying somewhat suddenly she died intestate to all appearance. This old lady was immeasurably fond of the old ramshackly house she lived in. So, after a while, to show

his contempt of her, graceless nephew had the house pulled down; the workmen picked out of the wall the will in question. An old servant of the lady, whom graceless nephew had turned off, lived hard by, and was sorrowfully watching the demolition of the house, when the will was picked out. Old servant read the will, and found herself down for 100*l.* Old servant took the will to a firm of solicitors, no other than Casenower's late partners. They sent down to Rachael's village; she and Patrick were gone; a neighbour said they were reaping somewhere in Oxfordshire. The firm sent a copy of the will to Casenower as a forlorn hope, and employed a person to look out for Rachael's return to her own place, as the best chance of doing business with her. By the will, 2000*l.* and Bix Farm were bequeathed to Rachael.

'Bix Farm! Three hundred acres!' cried Hathorn.

'Bix Farm—the farm Hickman is on,' cried Rose Mayfield. 'Kick him out, he has no lease. If you don't turn him out neck and crop before noon to-morrow, I'm a dead woman.'

'The farm is Robert's,' said Rachael; 'and so is all I have to give him, if he will accept it.' And though she looked at Mrs. Mayfield, she still clung to Robert.

Robert kissed her, and looked so proudly at them all! 'Have I chosen ill?' said Robert's eyes.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN everybody sees how a story will end, the story is ended.

Robert and Rachael live on their own farm, Bix; Corporal Patrick sits by their fire-side.

People laugh at Mr. Casenower's eccentricities; but it is found unsafe to laugh at them in presence of Mrs. Casenower, late Mayfield.

I think I cannot conclude better than by quoting a few words that passed between Mrs. Hathorn and Corporal Patrick, as they all sat round one table that happy evening.

'Rose,' said this homely good creature, 'I do notice that trouble comes to all of us at one time or other; and I think they are the happiest that have their trouble (like these two children) in the morning of their days.'

'Ay, dame,' said the Corporal, taking up the word, 'and after that a bright afternoon, and a quiet evening —as mine will be now, please God!'

Friendly reader (for I have friendly as well as un-

friendly readers), I do not wish you a day without a cloud, for you are human, and I, though a writer, am not a humbug. But, in ending this tale, I wish you a bright afternoon, and a tranquil evening, and above all a clear sky when the sun goes down.

THE BLOOMER.

CHAPTER I.

Propria quæ maribus tribuuntur mascula dicas.
Free Trans.—The things that are proper to males you may call masculine.

JOHN COURTENAY was the son of Richard Courtenay. Richard was the younger son of a good Devonshire family: his elder brother inherited four thousand a-year—he fifteen hundred pounds down from the same relative, his father—vive l'Angleterre!

His fifteen hundred pounds wouldn't do in a genteel country like England; so he went to America and commerce. He died richer than the owner of Courtenay Court.

John, his son, was richer still by the same honourable means.

He was also a staunch republican. The unparalleled rise and grandeur of the United States might well recommend their institutions to any candid mind; and John Courtenay spent his leisure moments in taking the gloss off John Bull's hide. He was not so spiteful against him as some of those gentry who owe their

cleverness to themselves, but their existence to Bull, and forget it: his line was rather cool contempt. The old country was worn out and decayed; it was progressing like a crab instead of going a-head, etc., etc., etc., etc.

For all this, one fine day something seemed to crack inside John Courtenay's bosom, when he saw an announcement from the modest pen of Robins that Courtenay Court was in the market.

He did not think such an advertisement would have interested him any more than consols ninety-six and a half—but it did.

This gentleman was at the moment working a loan at 5 per cent. with Kentucky; and he had promised himself to be in it to the tune of 50,000*l.*: but all this day he took more snuff than was good for him, and the next day after breakfast and a reverie he suddenly burst out 'Pshaw! the worst investment in the worst country: a sinking interest in a sinking kingdom.'

'Papa!' said a musical voice, 'your paying me no attention will I fear end in your being worried.'

This worrying meant a certain violent system of kissing with which the speaker used to fall upon John Courtenay when he was very good or very bad: she used it indifferently as a reward or punishment.

This time to her surprize the old gentleman answered her smiling threat by opening his arms in a moment and saying 'My child!'

In another moment Caroline Courtenay was in his

arms: he pressed his lips to her brow and said 'I will do it! I will do it!'

'What will you do Papa?

'That is my business I reckon,' said he, recovering the statesman and man of business with rather a brusque reaction—and off he bustled to Wall Street, 'where merchants most do congregate.'

Caroline stood irresolute and had a mind to whimper—she thought her affection had been for once half repulsed.

Caroline! doubt anything, everything, but a parent's love for his only child.

CHAPTER II.

In three weeks after this the hammer came to Courtenay Court, and that hammer was wielded (I use the term he would have selected) by the St. George of the auction room.

Need I say the wood and water of the estate had previously been painted in language as flowing as the one and as exuberant as the foliage of the other?

In the large hall were two fire-places where piles of beech-log blazed and crackled.

Mr. Robins made his bow and up went Courtenay Court, Manor and Lordship, in a single lot.

There were present, besides farmers, some forty country gentlemen, many of whom looked business;

they had not examined their own horizon as John Courtenay Merchant had. Land was in vogue

I don't wonder at it.

Certainly a landed estate is 'an animal with its mouth always open.' But compare the physical perception and enjoyment of landed wealth with that of consols and securities.

Can I get me rosy cheeks, health, and good humour, riding up and down my Peruvian bonds: can I go out shooting upon my parchment, or in summer sit under the shadow of my mortgage deed, and bob for commas and troll for semicolons in my river of ink that mæanders through my meadow of sheep skin?

Wherefore I really think land will always tempt even the knowing ones, until some vital change shall take place in society: for instance, till the globe makes its exit in smoke and the blue curtain comes down on the Creation.

Three or four gentlemen held the bidding up till about thirty thousand pounds; it then became flat.

And now one Adam Eaves, a farmer, pushed sheepishly forward, made an advance on the bidding, and looked ashamed.

Why lookest thou ashamed, O yeoman, bulwark of our isle?

This is why. Adam Eaves farmed two farms; and he had for three years been praying his landlords for a decrease of rent, upon grounds that nowise tallied with his little offer of thirty thousand one hundred pounds

down on the nail for Courtenay Manor; and therefore looked he ashamed the simple-minded yeoman bulwark of our isle.

Joshua Tanner, linen-draper in the market-town, he whose cry for ten years had been the decay of retail trade, was so surprized at this that thrown off his guard he bid an hundred more—but the mask once thrown off, he blushed not, but sprinkled insulting arrogance on all around.

Both these worthies who, unlike us writers, had for years announced themselves beneath their true value, gave way to heavier metal, and the estate began to approach its real worth. It was at 38,000*l.*

There was a pause. St. George looked jocose, and felt uneasy: were they running cunning like their own hounds these South country gentlemen?

He now looked carefully all round the room: a long attenuated figure with a broad-brimmed hat on, standing by a distant window, met his eye and, as if to oblige him, now for the first time made a cool nonchalant bid by nodding his head—round went all the company on their heels with their backs to the auctioneer, as, when in the last row of the pit two personages of this our day go to fisticuffs, I have seen the audience turn its back on the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius, or Melantius and Amyntor.

Forty-two, three, four thousand were reached—two country gentlemen bidders turned red and white—the pin bid on, rythmically, at measured intervals, like a

chaff-cutting machine, unconscious of opposition, indifferent to result.

The estate was now at thirty years' purchase; a hum that went round the room announced this fact without a word spoken—all the hounds had tailed off but one. He went on. The two bidders were strangely contrasted: it seemed odd they could both want the same thing. In shape one was like a pin: the other a pin-cushion.

Our friend at the window was all one colour, like wash-leather, or an actor by day-light; the other with his head of white hair as thick as a boy's, and his red brown cheeks, and his bright eye, reflected comfort as brightly as Hampton Court with its red brick and white facings, and cheered the eye like old Sun and old Frost battling for a December day.

At last the thin and sallow personage uttered these words, 'Forty-seven thousand pounds!!!' in a nasal twang that seemed absurdly unjust to the grand ideas such words excite in elegant minds conscious how many refined pleasures can be had for 47,000*l.*

His antagonist's head sunk for a moment.

He sighed, and instead of bidding higher or holding his tongue, the two business alternatives open to him, he said, 'then it will never be mine!'

He said this so simply, yet with so much pain, that some of those good souls, who unless they have two days to think it over with their wives or sisters, are sure to take the pathetic for the ludicrous, horse-laughed at him.

He turned away. Mr. Robins did not waste a second in idle flourishes; when a thing is settled, end it, thought he: he knocked the lot down now as he would a china tea-pot in a sale of 200 lots—and the old oaks of Courtenay bowed their heads to a Yankee merchant.

The buyer stepped up to the auctioneer.

Mr. Ralph Seymour, the last bidder, made for the door—at the door he buttoned with difficulty his coat over his breast, for his heart was swelling and his eye glistened—it was a bitter disappointment—we who live in towns can hardly think how bitter. Such sales do not come every day in the country: his estate marched for a mile-and-a-half with the Courtenays. He had counted on no competition but that of his neighbours; he had bought it from them: but a man who happened to want an estate had come from London, or as it was now whispered, from New York.

Any other estate would have suited *him* as well but he *would* have this.

Poor old gentleman, he had told Mrs. Seymour she should walk this evening under the great birch trees of the Courtenays—and they be her's!

They had been married forty years, and he had never broken his word to her before.

The auctioneer read the buyer's card

'Sold to Mr. Jonathan Sims,'—said he.

'Ugh!' went one or two provincials, and then dead silence.

'Acting,' continued the auctioneer, 'for MR. JOHN COURTENAY OF NEW YORK.'

There was a pause—a hurried buzz—and then, to Mr. Sims' surprise, a thundering 'hurrah' burst out that made the rafters ring and the windows rattle.

'It's Master Richard's son,' shouted Adam Eaves. 'My father's ridden many's the time with Master Richard, he rode the mule, and father the Jenny-ass after Squire Courtenay's hounds, HURRAIH!'

Omnes] 'Hurraih!'

The thorough-bred old John Bull at the door, Mr. Ralph Seymour, seemed glad of an excuse to get rid of some bile foreign to his nature. In three strides he was alongside Jonathan, and had he been French it was plain he would have said something neat, but as he was only English he grasped Mr. Sims's hand like a vice—and—asked him to dinner.

That is the English idea,—you must ask a gentleman to dinner; and you must give a poor man a day's work—that wins him.

John Courtenay came home: I omit the objections he took, chemin faisant, to things in the old country. They would fill a volume with just remonstrance.

He came to his own lodge gate—the old man who opened it sung out—

'Oh! Master John how like you be to Master Richard sure*ly*.'

Courtenay was astonished: he found this old boy

had been thinking of him all that way off for sixty years, ever since his birth transpired—

The old housekeeper welcomed him with tears in her eyes.

He dined in a room enriched with massive old carvings—he walked after dinner under his avenue of birches with silver stems of gigantic thickness and Patriarchal age. The housekeeper put him in a bed his father had slept in when a boy.

Soon the country gentlemen made acquaintance with him. The strong idea of distributive justice he had brought from commerce, and his business habits, caused him to be consulted and valued.

It is a fact that after some months in Devonshire he developed a trait or two of Toryism, but they could not make him believe that nations are the property of Kings, and countries their home farms. They did all they could think of to corrupt him.

They made him perforce a justice of the peace; he remonstrated and pooh-poohed, but was no sooner one than he infused fresh blood into the withered veins of justice in his district. He became a referee in all nice matters of rural equity. In short, his neighbours had all overcome any little prejudice and had learned his value when—they lost him. His time was come to close an honourable life by a peaceful death.

Short as had been his career among them, the whole county followed him to his resting place among the Courtenays in Conyton church vault.

He left all his land and all his money by will to his daughter—to his will he attached a paper containing some requests.

One was that she would provide for the aged housekeeper, and lodgekeeper, who knew his father—and welcomed him home—he called it home! But there was nothing about where he wished her to live—he did not decide the great little question is America or England the right place for us globules to swell and burst in.

In other words, when he wrote this letter, John Courtenay was dying, and thought less about the kingdom whence came his root, or the state where his flowers had bloomed, than of a country he had learned to look towards by being neither Yankee nor Briton so much as an honest God-fearing man: so his thoughts were now upon a land, older than little England, broader than the great United States: a land where Americans and English are brothers.

And I warn them and all men to be brothers here, lest they never see that land!

Caroline Courtenay remained at New York. There was little to tempt her to leave her birth-place, and visit the country which seemed to her to have robbed her of her father. It happened, however, about three years after Mr Courtenay's death that a fresh circumstance changed her feeling in that respect.

Young Reginald Seymour, who had come to see the States, had brought letters of introduction to her, and

had prolonged his stay from a fortnight to eight months, and he was eloquent in praise of Courtenay Court and of his father's place which adjoined it, and what Reginald praised Caroline desired to see.

Miss Courtenay combined two qualities which are generally seen in opposition, beauty and wit. On her wit, however, she had latterly cast some doubt by a trick she had fallen into.

She had been detected thinking for herself. Ay, more than once.

This came of being left an orphan, poor thing: she had no one to warn her, day by day, against this habit, which is said always to lead her sex into trouble when they venture upon it: luckily they don't do it very often.

Wealth, wit, and beauty meeting with young blood were enough to spoil a character: all they had done in this case, was to give her a more decided one than most young ladies of her age have, or could carry without spilling.

It so happened one day, that a question much agitated in parts of the United States occupied a semicircle of ladies, of whom Miss Courtenay was one. This was a new costume introduced by a highly respectable lady, the editor of a paper called the 'Lily,' and wife of a lawyer of some eminence at Seneca Falls.

The company, generally, were very severe on this costume, and proceeded upwards from the pantalettes to the morals of the inventor, which, though approved

at Seneca by simple observation, were depreciated at New York by intelligent inference.

When the conversation began, Miss Courtenay looked down on the bare idea of the Bloomer Costume.

But its vituperators shook her opinion by a very simple process;—they gave their reasons!!!!

'It is awkward and absurd,' said one, as by way of contrast she glided majestically to the piano to sing. As she spoke her foot went through her dress to the surprise of—nobody.

'It is highly indelicate to expose any portion of the — in short the, the, the,—ancle,' continued the lady at the piano.

'It is! Miss Jemima,' purred a smooth deferential gentleman looking over her; his eye dwelt complacently on two snowy hemispheres.

A little extravagance injures a good cause.

At last, Miss Courtenay, fired by opposition and unreasonable reasons, began to favor the general theory of Bloomer.

Next she converted several friends; still to the theory only: this got wind, and a general attack was made on her by her well-wishers: their arguments and sneers completed the business, and she was pretty far gone in bloomerism when the following scene took place in her own kitchen.

Elisa the cook was making pastry on the long oak-table, her face was redder than her work accounted for.

'Well, Elisa,' said Mrs. Trimmer the housekeeper 'your tongue won't stop of itself, of course not, so I'll stop it.'

'Do Maam,' suggested Elisa with meek incredulity.

'You shan't wear them here,' said Mrs. Trimmer.

'La Maam,' said the housemaid Angelina, 'she had better wear them in the house, than in the street with two hundred boys at her tail.'

'That is not my meaning,' answered Mrs. Trimmer 'I hired you for a female cook, and the moment you put on —— things that don't belong to a woman, our bargain's broke and you go.'

'Well it *is* an indelicate dress,' observed Angelina; then turning to John Giles, Elisa's sweetheart, who was eating pork at the dresser 'don't you think so, Mr. Giles?' enquired she affectedly.

'I-does!' said Giles with his mouth full. Giles was a Briton in the suite of young Seymour.

'Vulgar?' suggested Angelina.

'And no mistake,' said Giles, 'it's as vulgar as be blowed,' added he clenching the nail with his polished hammer.

'And who asked your opinion?' enquired Elisa sharply.

'Anglina!' replied Giles. Giles was matter of fact!

Elisa. I mean to wear it for as vulgar as 'tis.

Giles. Then you had better look out for another man (applause).

Elisa. Oh! they are always to be had without *look-*

ing out; so long as there's pickled pork in the kitchen they'll *look in.*

Angelina. Well I think a woman should dress to gratify the men (with an œillade at Giles) not to imitate them.

Elisa. The men! so long as we sweep the streets for them with our skirts, they are all right. You talk of delicacy: is dirt delicacy?

On this she whipped off a chair by the fire a gown that had met with a misfortune: it had been out walking on a wet day. Elisa put it viciously under Angelina's nose, who recoiled. An accurate description of it would soil these pages.

'Is that pretty,' continued cook, 'to carry a hundredweight of muck wherever you go?'

'Dirt can't be helped,' retorted Trimmer, 'Indecency can.'

'Indecent!' cried Elisa with a face like scarlet 'Who's a going to be indecent in this kitchen?'

'The gals,' suggested Angelina, 'who wear—who wear—'

'Small clothes,' put in Giles.

A grateful glance repaid him for extricating the pair from a conventional difficulty.

'What it's indecent because it shows your instep I suppose? You go into the drawing-room this evening and the young ladies shall show you more than ever a Bloomer will. Women's delicacy!' said Elisa putting her hand under the paste and bringing it down on the

reverse with a whack 'Gammon! Fashion is what we care for, not delicacy. If it was the fashion to tie our right foot to our left ear wouldn't you do it?'

'No!' said Angelina with but little hesitation.

'Then I would!' cried Elisa sacrificing herself to her argument. 'What did they wear last year,' continued this orator 'Eh? answer me that whisking to and fro as they walked and drawing everybody's attention.'

In speaking, Elisa was worse than I am in writing, she never punctuated at all.

'So you mean to wear them?' enquired Mrs. Trimmer, coming back from the argument to the point.

Elisa. Yes! I do!

Observe! At the beginning of the argument she had no such intention.

Mrs. Trimmer. Then I give you a month's warning, here and now, Elisa Staunton!

Elisa. And I won't take it from you, Mrs. Trimmer.

Mrs. Trim. Who will you take it from then?

Elisa. The mistress or nobody.

Angelina. La! Lisa, you know she never speaks to a servant.

Elisa. She speaks to Mrs. Trimmer don't she?

Mrs. Trim. Am I a servant, hussy? Am I a servant?

Elisa. Yes! you are, we are all servants here: some is paid for doing the work, and other some for looking on and interrupting it here and there.

Mrs. Trim. (*Gasping.*) Leave the kitchen young woman.

Elisa. The kitchen's mine and the housekeeper's room is yours old woman.

'Go to the mistress and tell her I want to come and speak to her,' gasped the insulted housekeeper deprived of motion by her fury.

Angelina took but one step before Elisa caught her, held the roller high above her head and saying, 'if you offer to go there I'll roll ye up into my paste,' pushed her down into a chair, where she roared and blubbered.

'Oh! you rude brutal behaved woman,' cried Trimmer—'I shall faint.'

Helps have an insolence all their own; they say the most cutting things with a tone of extra sweetness and courtesy, that has the effect of fire quenched with sweet oil, or brandy softened with oil of vitriol.

With such sweet and measured tones Elisa said half under her breath, 'Giles! you *go*—into the housekeeper's room—and look behind the door—and you'll find—the biggest brandy bottle you ever did see—Mrs. Trimmer wants it! ! ! ! !'

This dry little speech was hartshorn. Some spring seemed to have been pressed, so erect bounced Mrs. Trimmer!

She bustled up to Elisa and with a spite that threatened annihilation gave her an infinitesimal pat on the back of her head, and retired precipitately

with a face in which misgiving already took the place of fury.

Elisa put down the roller quite leisurely and cleaned her fingers slowly of dough.

'It is lucky for you' said she firmly, 'that you are the same age as my mother, or down you'd go on those bricks, Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh!' and down went she on a chair opposite Angelina, and her apron over her head: for these women who are going to tear the house down and stand like mercury on the debris, in a bloomer, with a finger pointing to truth and a toe to futurity, are just two shades more faint hearted at bottom than the others.

So Elisa and Angelina kept up the bawl with great want of spirit, bursting out in turns, after the manner of strophe and antistrophe.

Et ululare pares et *de*spondere paratæ.

Meantime the man of one idea at a time, Giles, was obeying orders and going after the bottle specified by Elisa, and had his hand on the door of housekeeper's room.

'Giles!' screamed the proprietor. He stood petrified, 'there is no such thing in my room,' said she with sudden calmness.

Giles returned to the dresser.

The present scene had lately received an addition that made it perfect, a satirical spectator.

The pantry window which looked into the kitchen

was opened by a footman whose head had been previously seen bobbing wildly up and down as he cleaned his plate.

This footman had admired Elisa, but outweighed by the solid virtues and limbs of Giles, was furtively looking out for a chance of disturbing the balance.

Elisa and Angelina were now sobbing placidly.

Mr. Giles stretched his legs slowly out before him and said very slowly, and with really an appearance of reflection 'now all this—here—bobbery—comes from a woman—making up—*her* mind—to wear—the—B-ugh a ha ho ho! ugh!'

Elisa had bounced up in a rage and dabbed the paste right over his mouth, nose, eyes, face, and temples. (He should have spoken quicker.)

It was nearly his death: however with horrible noises and distortions he got clear of it.

The footman roared with laughter—he thought he never had seen so truly funny a thing done in his life—none of your vulgar jokes—'legitimate humour,' thought John, (Giles being my rival.) However turning suddenly grave he said—

'Well you are drawing it mild, you are—here's the mistress coming to see whose cat's dead.' So saying he slammed the window and his head went bobbing again over his spoons.

At this announcement histrionics commenced. 'Mrs. Trimmer, madam' began Elisa demurely with a total change of manner 'I'm sure maam you would'nt take

away a poor girl's place that's three thousand miles away from home all for a word maam!'

'You may pack up your box, Elisa, for you won't sleep in this house,' was the grim answer.

'Oh Mrs. Trimmer' remonstrated Elisa tearfully, 'if you have no heart for poor servants where do you expect to go to?'

'I shall go nowhere,' replied the dignitary, 'I shall stay here, it's you that shall march,' then hearing a light step approach she astonished them all by suddenly rising into a wild sonorous recitative—

'I have my mistress's confidence and will deserve it.'

Miss Courtenay stood on the threshold.

Mrs. Trimmer's game was not to see her. She intoned a little louder.

'No woman shall stay a day in this house.'

'Well I never!' gasped Angelina, looking towards the door.

'Hold your tongue—no woman shall stay a day in this house who thinks to put on that *im*moral, *on*delicate, *on*decent ah! ah! ah!' Trimmer screamed, put her nose out straight in the air—put on her spectacles and screamed again.

Miss Courtenay stood at the door in a suit of propria quæ maribus!!!

CHAPTER III.

THE world up to that moment had never seen so smart a fella as caused Trimmer's recitative to die in a quaver; h\ sh/e stood in the threshold erect yet lithe, the serpentine lines of youthful female beauty veiled yet not disguised in vest, and pantaloons of marvellous cut—neat little collars, dapper shoes, and gaiters, delicious purple broad-cloth.

'Giles!' groaned Mrs. Trimmer 'you may go for what Elisa said—anybody may do anything now, I nursed her on these knees,' whined the poor woman with the piteous tone that always accompanies this favourite statement.

'Trimmer,' said the Courtenay coldly 'theatrical exhibitions amuse but do not deceive—be yourself.'

'Yes maam,' answered Trimmer coolly, dropping her histrionics directly and taking up her tact.

'Hearing cries of distress from my household I came to see if I could be of any service to you—what is the matter?'

'If you please maam,' put in Elisa hastily 'it is all along of Mrs. Trimmer being so hard upon the bloomers maam.'

A short explanation followed.

Elisa was asked why she had defended this costume.

Elisa having found such a backer was fluent in defence of the new costume.

The rest looked unutterable things, but could say nothing.

In the middle of one of her long sentences her mistress cut her short—congratulated her demurely on her sense—informed her that she wished one of the servants to assist her in a little scheme for recommending the dress—that she should have hesitated to propose it, but having found one already so disposed would use her services.

'On my bed you will find a costume; put it on immediately and come to me for further instructions,' so saying, she vanished with a sly smile.

Elisa watched her departing form with a rueful face. She discovered when too late that she had never for a moment intended to wear the thing, and had only defended it out of contrariness: she moved towards the door like a lamb to sacrifice.

'Ahem!' said Mrs. Trimmer 'you can go into the street dressed like a hobbadehoy if you like, Miss Staunton, but if I might ask a favour it is that you won't tell the people what house you come out of—because I come of decent people in the neighbourhood that might feel hurt and leave the town owing to such a thing being seen come out of the house where I am: that's all maam! And I am a regular attendant on public and family worship.'

This was said very politely.

'Well maam,' answered Elisa beginning as politely

but heating so much per sentence, 'I don't know as Bloomers are so like what you mention maam as your own gown would be maam if it was a bit cleaner maam: but whenever I meet a new married couple coming from church I'll step up to the bride and I'll say Mrs. Trimmer requests you would be so good as not put on yuur night gown before supper next time—she's turned so devilish modest *all of a sudden.*'

So saying Elisa flounced out in a rage, and her blood being put up burned now to go through with it.

CHAPTER IV.

REGINALD SEYMOUR was a handsome gentlemanly fellow, heir apparent of the unsuccessful bidder for Courtenay Court.

He had been for six months the declared lover of the heiress; and his sister Harriet, warmly invited by Miss Courtenay, had at length taken advantage of an escort offered by an English family, and was a guest of the fiancée.

If Reginald had a fault it was too strong a consciousness of the antiquity and importance of the Seymours, and as that was combined with a determination to hand down their name as pure as he had received it, it was a very excusable weakness.

He was however perhaps rather more formal and stately than suited his youth.

It was in the dusk of the evening that Harriet

Seymour full dressed for the ball and entertainment came into a sort of antechamber with a bouquet of choice flowers in her hand, and there encountered Caroline, for whom in fact she was looking: at sight of her friend, Harriet did not at first comprehend; all she realized was that her friend's shoulders were not visible.

'What not dressed yet Caroline?' said she, 'it is very late.'

'I am dressed dear.'

'Why of course I see you have some clothes on for fun,—he! he! but it is to be a ball dear.'

'My feet will be as unembarrassed as yours dear,' replied Caroline quietly.

Harriet gave her the bouquet, and said with much meaning—'Reginald sends you these. Of course you did not know he was returned.'

'Of course I did,' was the reply 'he is to be here.'

Harriet. Oh!—Reginald loves you Caroline.

Caroline. So he pretends.

Harrt. He loves you with all the force of an honest heart—and I love you for his sake and your own—give me the privilege of a sister—let me advise you.

Carol. With all my heart.

Harrt. Yes! but advice is apt to be ill received.

Carol. That is because it is given hastily and harshly—but true friends like you! and me—oh fie!

Harrt. Promise then not to be angry with me.

Carol. Certainly—only you must promise not to be angry if I am too silly or self-willed to take it.

Harrt. I should not be angry love, though I might be grieved on your own account.

Carol. Well then dear.

Harrt. Well then dear—Do not receive society in this costume. I will never tell Reginald and do not you let him know you ever wore it.

Carol. But how can I help it when he is going to see me in it.

Harrt. It is for your delicacy, your feminine qualities he has loved you.

Carol. Has he? (*looking down.*) Well those qualities reside in our souls not our—habiliments.

Harrt. Not in such habiliments as those—He will be shocked.

Carol. No! only surprised a little, he! he!

Harrt. He will be grieved, Caroline.

Carol. I shall console him.

Harrt. (*With color heightening.*) He will be indignant.

Carol. (*With color rising.*) I shall laugh at him.

Harrt. He will be disgusted.

Carol. Ah! then I shall dismiss him.

Harrt. I see I speak to no purpose Miss Courtenay.

Carol. To very little Miss Seymour.

Harrt. I shall say no more madam.

Carol. You have said enough madam.

Harrt. Since you despise my advice—please yourself.

Carol. I shall take your advice at present.

Harrt. But you will *never* be my brother's wife!

Carol. Then I shall *always* be mistress in my own house.

Harriet who was at the door returned as if to speak, but she was too angry, gave it up and retired half choking.

A sacred joy filled Caroline's bosom—she had had the last word! !

As she was about to pass out of the room who should enter hastily but Reginald Seymour—her back was towards him.

He called to her 'Can you tell me where I shall find Miss Courtenay sir!'

Caroline bit her lips; but she turned sharply round and said 'She is in this room madam!'

'Oh!' said Reginald—he added 'Oh! Caroline,' and looked pained.

Caroline blushed; and if heavenly looks and little female artifice could have softened censure they were not wanting.

'What beautiful flowers you have sent me' said she 'see I threw away my formal bouquet for your *nose-gay.*'

'You do me honor,' said the young gentleman uneasily.

'Honor! no! but Justice; a single violet from you deserves to be preferred to roses and camellias.'

'Dear Caroline! I withdraw; you are not dressed yet, and people will soon arrive.'

Caroline saw there was no real way of escape, so with great external calmness she said sweetly—

'I am dressed, dear Reginald.'

'I beg your pardon' said he as not understanding her.

'I forgive you,' said the sly thing taking him up, 'there are so many who do not see the beauty of—all this; I have promised to wear it to-night,' continued she (not allowing him to get in a word) 'and to compare it calmly and candidly with other costumes; you will be so amused, and we shall arrive at a real judgment instead of violent prejudices, which you are above; at least I give you credit: I should not admire you so much as I do if I doubted that.'

'Caroline,' said the young gentleman gravely.

'Yes Reginald.'

'Dear Caroline do you believe I love you?'

'Better than I deserve, I dare say,' said Caroline.

'No! as you deserve—I will not own my love inferior even to your merit—do you believe that when we are one my life will be devoted to your happiness?'

'I am sometimes—goose enough—to hope so'—murmured Caroline averting her head.

'Shall you then think ill of me if before marriage I ask a favor, perhaps a sacrifice of you? I feel I shall not be ungrateful.'

'There' thought Caroline. 'I am not to wear it—that is plain.'

Reginald continued—'If you wear this dress you

will give me pain beyond any pleasure you can derive.'

'Reginald,' said the poor girl 'I wished to wear it—now and then; indeed I *had* set my heart on making a *few*—a very few converts to it; see how pretty it is:' —(no answer)—'but for your sake when I take it off to-night I will give it away, and it shall never, never offend you more.'

Reginald kissed her hand.

There was a pause.

'Caroline,' said he stammering 'you do not quite understand me; it is to-day I beg you on no account to wear it.'

'Oh! to-day,' said she hastily 'I have promised to wear it.'

'I entreat you,' said he, 'consider, if you once show yourself to people from every part of New York in this costume, what more remains to be done?'

'Reginald, be reasonable,' said Caroline more coldly 'I stand engaged to some sixty persons to wear this dress to-night—I have made you a concession, and with pleasure, because I make it to you. It is your turn now—you must think of me as well as of yourself —dear Reginald. I am afraid you must shut your eyes on me for a few hours—that will spoil all my pleasure—or you must fancy as many a lover has been able to do, that I consecrate a dress, not that a dress has power to lower me.'

'Oh! Caroline! do you value my respect?'

'Yes! and therefore I shall keep my word, and so you will feel sure I shall keep my word to you too if ever I promise something about (*blushes and smiles*) love—honour—and obey.'

A battle took place in the young man's mind.

He took several strides backwards and forwards.

At last he burst out, 'There are feelings too strong to be conquered by our wishes.

'I cannot bear that my wife should do what three-fourths of her sex think indelicate. We never differed in opinion before, we never shall again—if we do, be assured I will bow to you—I would yield here if I could, but I cannot—I think you can—if you can, have pity on me, and add one more claim to my life long gratitude.'

The balance trembled—the tears were in Caroline's eyes—her bosom fluttered—when the Demon of Discord inspired her proud nature with this idea—

'He loves his prejudices better than you' said Discord 'and this is Tyranny—coaxing Tyranny if you will.'

On this hint spake Caroline.

'I find I have rivals.'

'Rivals.'

'In your prejudices, Reginald. Neither person, nor thing shall ever be my rival. Show me at once which you love with the deeper affection, Mr. Seymour's prejudices or Caroline Courtenay. I shall wear this dress to-night—only for a few hours: consider! you

will be here and keep me in countenance, or you don't love me.'

'No! Caroline' said Reginald sadly and firmly 'I have spoken: our future life now rests in your hands —I shall not come—I shall arrange so that if you degrade yourself (I cling to the hope you will not) I shall hear of it and leave the country that minute! Were I to *see* it, by heaven I should leave the world,' he said this in a great heat, but recovering himself said 'forgive me!' kissed her hand and went despondently away.

Caroline on his departure wished he had gone away in a pet instead of sorrowful—wished he had been her husband to cut the matter short by carrying her in his arms and securing her in his dressing room till the ball was over: wished she had never seen the bloomer costume—wished she had the courage to hide and cry in an attic till all was over.

On her meditations entered a plump figure with all manner of expressions chasing one another over her countenance—this was Elisa, who curtseyed to attract attention and failing presumed that her deportment had not corresponded with her costume, so bowed instead, and ducked, and as a last resource gave a pull at the top of her head.

Caroline. Well!

Elisa. If you please maam—but if you please maam am I to say maam or sir now maam?

Carol. Madam will do for the present.

Elisa. If you please maam Kitty the housemaid, that was to wear the short waisted gown before the company, says she won't put it on for a double dollar.

Carol. Promise her four dollars then.

Elisa. Yes M.

Carol. The girl's mother would have been as loth to wear a long waist.

Elisa. Yes M.

Carol. And to-morrow morning tell Trimmer to discharge her.

Elisa. Yes! M! Oho! thought Elisa, 'then now is the time to trim that old fagot Trimmer.'

'If you please maam I have the greatest respect for Mrs. Trimmer, because she has been here longer than I have, and is a good servant maam there's no denying it; but if you please M. there's no putting Mrs. Trimmer out of her turnpike road as the saying is. She says if I don't make the jellies and blamonge she'll make you turn me off maam; now how can I when I'm got to learn off all those words you gave me if you please maam am I take your orders or Mrs. Trimmer's M.

Carol. Now I must ask you a question—who are you?

Elisa. La maam! I am Elisa mum! cook mum! I make guava jelly that you like so maam!

Carol. Very well! then Elisa cook, for six hours you are my lieutenant here, and queen in the kitchen: give your orders, and discharge Trimmer and every man

woman in the house that disobeys you and I'll confirm all you do.

Elisa. Yes M. (with flashing eyes.)

Carol. And if you abuse your authority you shall be the first victim.

Elisa. Yes M. (crest fallen).

'There' said Elisa to herself as she absconded with a modest reverence 'I've been and given you a dig in your old ribs with my rolling pin Mrs. Trimmer.'

'Until to-day' thought her mistress 'a look from me was law, and now every creature high and low thwarts and opposes me, ever since I put these vile things on.'

Now some would have carried the reasoning out thus—Ergo, take these vile things off!

But this sweet creature never dreamed of that path of inference.

'Of this there can be but one consequence' said she 'I shall do it ten times the more.'

She then burst out crying, which was an unfair advantage the Bloomer took over poor Reginald: for after a shower of tears the ladies acquire additional force.

Rat a tat, tat a tat, tat! tat! tat! tat!

The guests arrived. We shall only particularize one. Mr. Fitzpatrick, an Irish gentleman, who had retained the delightful qualities of his nation and rubbed off its ignorance, and down its prejudices.

Handsome, gay, and though not varnished, polished, he was as charming a companion as either a man or woman could desire.

He was as fond of men as Englishmen are of women, and as fond of the ladies, as an Englishman is of adulterated wine.

Fitzpatrick's flattery was agreeable to the ladies: it was so very sincere—he really saw en beau both them and all their ways.

At sight of Miss Courtenay in a Bloomer he was ravished.

'Oh! Miss Caroline but that's a beautiful costume ye've invented: the few of us that's left standing will fall to-night: ye've no conscience at all.'

'I did not invent the hideous thing; it is Bloomer.'

'Bloomer? ye're joking. What! is it this they've been running down. Oh! the haythen barbarians!!!! ye were a rainbow at the last ball; but now ye're a sunbeam—ye'll not be for dancing the first dance with an uncouth Celt.'

'You will not be for waiting till the seventh, Mr. Fitzpatrick!'

'Is it only six ye're engaged? ? ! oh but I'm in luck to-night.'

Mr. Fitzpatrick had been for some time puzzled which he loved most, Harriet Seymour or Caroline Courtenay: but last week he had decided in favour of the latter; without prejudice to the former.

The dancing was kept up with some spirit for two

hours; and then Caroline's associates were observed to steal out and to make for various apartments in her very large house on the doors of which their respective names were written in chalk.

Results, not processes, are for the public eye.

Suffice it to say at present in excuse of Caroline's obstinacy that she had been at no small trouble and expense to carry out her little idea. She had also read, drawn, composed, and written: others that saw the work had given her credit for some talent, great talent of course they said: and she was mortified to think her lover would not give her this opportunity of showing him her wit, on which she secretly valued herself more than on her beauty.

A polka concluded. A tide of servants poured in. A semicircle of seats sprung up. A pulpit rose like an exhalation, and almost before her guests could seat themselves, Caroline was a lecturer wearing over her Bloomer a B. C. L. gown from Oxford, and the four-cornered cap of that University on her head.

L'Effrontée! of whom think you she had borrowed this two days before?—of Reginald!

The optimist Fitzpatrick was enchanted—'she was more beautiful in this than even in a Bloomer!' And indeed it became her—the gravity of the dress made a keen contrast with her archness. She was like a vivid flower springing unexpectedly from some time-stained wall—dancing, vanity, wit, pique at Reginald, and the flattery of others made her cheek flush, her eyes flash.

'Ahem!' said she in the dry as dust tone of a lecturer, 'Ladies and gentlemen; as you will have to bear with many costumes this evening, permit me to begin with this:

'I wear it ladies and gentlemen because it is supposed to confer a right to be tedious—a-hem!

'I am here to attack two principal errors.

'One is that such fashions as embarrass the limbs are of a nature to last upon earth.

'The other is that pantaloons are essentially masculine and sweeping robes feminine.

'Ladies and gentlemen, we women can only predict the future by examining the past—moles and rabbits may have some other way, though I think not.

'Elisa!

'Call back past facts with lessons fraught,
To teach us,—if we can be taught.'

Elisa opened the door.

Miss Spilman the musical associate splashed a magnificent chord on the piano, and in sailed Queen Elizabeth! I mean a lady in the exact costume in which that Queen went into the City to return thanks for the destruction of the Spanish Armada.

Set a stomacher three feet long between two monstrous jelly bags upon a bloated bell, and there you have this Queen and her successor in New York.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' said the lecturer, 'common sense fell flatter than Spain the day royalty appeared thus!

'Could a duck make a doll this would be the result.

'Yet this costume, as much admired once as ours is now, is only the principle of our own carried a step farther: at the head of our principle is the sack in which rustics jump at a fair—next comes Queen Bess, and then come we.

'With us motion is *embarrassed.*

'With Queen Bess motion is *impeded.*

'With the sack motion is *obstructed.*

'In rational and therefore permanent costumes motion is *free.* Vide Time and the World!'

(*A Chord.*)

With a multiplicity of affectation in came a courtier the point of whose shoes touched his knees, and he seemed proud of them.

No remark was made: this thing spoke for itself.

Next a noise was heard, and with infinite difficulty a lady was squeezed in who wore the genuine hoop.

Two short-waisted ladies came in.

Everybody laughed at the sight of them.

Straight one of them burst out a-crying! this was Kitty, who was instantly attempted to be consoled (as the papers phrase it) by Mr. Fitzpatrick: he told her nothing could disguise her comeliness: and really thought so at the moment.

This dress set people talking: those who had worn it confessed to the younger ones that they had thought it beautiful, and had anticipated the destruction of

nature as soon as the demise of this phase of the unnatural.

Then followed jigot sleeves.

Two chords were struck on the piano, and Miss Courtenay resumed her lecture thus.

Recitative.

'All these good people when they were here thought they must be here for ever
Or as long as men and women, and Primrose hill and the Mississippi River
But they proved more like the flower than the hill that bears its name—
And instead of the great Mississippi, they were bubbles floating down that same.

Song.

'Such fashions are like poppies spread
You seize the flower, the bloom is fled:
Or like a snow-flake on a river
A moment seen, then gone for ever.'

'We have shown you the costumes that could not stand the shock of time:
You shall now see what sort of costumes have stood the brunt of centuries—compare the Bloomers
With each in turn—and you will be on the path of Truth.'

Armenian, Polish, and Sicilian Peasants were then introduced whose limbs were free enough goodness knows—they ranged themselves in a line opposite their stiff competitors—and a Bloomer took up the recitative,

'All these unlike the Bloomer confine the limbs and make the ribs to crack
All those like Bloomers free the mind, the body, and the back,
So hail to great Amelia who takes a sex out of a sack.'

Song.

'For grace is motion unconfined
Like rippling sea or sweeping wind
Free as the waves of yellow corn
That bows to greet the breezy morn.'

The applause had but just subsided when a clear rich quaint voice arose, and to the equal surprize of the lecturer and company trilled forth the following stanza to some fossil tune. Chevy chace—we really believe.

'The ass with four legs has the wit
None of those four to tether—
But there's a greater ass with two
That ties those two together.'

While the others sat aghast.

'Now that was like honey dropping from the comb,' exclaimed Fitzpatrick.

'Now you know Mr. Fitzpatrick it was like vinegar distilling from a cruet,' replied Miss Courtenay.

'There *was* an agreeable acidulation compared with yours Miss Courtenay, but in itself delicious,' retorted the optimist.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' said the modern Portia 'the first head of my lecture is before you. I am now to prove that pantaloons are not necessarily masculine nor long skirts feminine.'

On this entered two Persian women in gorgeous costume and very spacious trousers.

They salaamed to Caroline and the Bloomers, but seemed staggered by the other figures—whilst they

whispered and eyed the company Caroline lectured

'Ladies this costume is worn by half the well dressed women in the world: and we must not flatter ourselves we are more feminine than Mussul women—on the contrary these pantalooned females practice a reserve, compared with which the modesty of Europe is masculine impudence.

A Lady. Make them speak. I don't think they are women at all.

Carol. They are women I assure you Miss White, for one has just borrowed a pin of me.

Miss W. Then why don't they talk?

Carol. He! he! the inference is just.—They are going to speak—unless they have forgotten all I—

Zuleima. They *have* feet, and even legs. O Holy Prophet here are women who muffle their feet, and reveal their necks to the gaze of man.

Fatima. What dirt has this people eaten? Can this be the great Frank nation, whose ships subdue every sea, and whose wisdom and probity are such that the evil spirit himself cannot get the better of them in making bargains: are these sea kings sprung from fools, who hide their feet which were made for show and motion, and reveal their faces and necks, which is unlawful?

Zulem. Daughter of the Commander of the Faithful —your slave has an idea.

Fatim. (with some surprise) Bismillah! In the name of the Prophet let me hear it.

Zulem. Three revolutions of the moon are completed since we sailed in ships from Istamboul: in the meantime Sheitan has doubtless obtained permission to derange this people's intellects, that so they may be converted to the true faith. Thus, their brains being confounded, they muffle their feet, and reveal their necks without shame to the gaze of man: your slave has spoken.

Fatim. It is well spoken: it is also a nation which sups on opium—and drinks hot wine, as a camel sucks water in the desert—we will therefore sit on ottomans and laugh.

Zulem. Be cheshm! On my eyes be it!

Fatim. Seven days.

Zulem. And seven nights.

Fatim. At these children

Zulem. Of Burnt Fathers.

Fat & Zul. We will laugh. Seven days
And seven nights
At these children
Of Burnt Fathers!

They then sat like little tailors on two ottomans opposite each other and nodding like mandarins laughed mechanically as became people who were going to make seven nights of it.

Caroline Adsis, O Cato. Call him Eliza.

Eliza If you please um would you say them words again.

Carol. Adsis O Cato.

Eliza. Assist us old king Cole!

Cato swept in with a magnificent toga—

'Adsum,' said he, 'quis me vocat?'

Carol. Be pleased sir to tell us which are the most masculine and which the most feminine of these good souls.

Cato folded his arms and took three antique strides, 'these cackling creatures,' said he 'are Persian women—this (Elisa) is a native I believe of some barbarous country not yet under the dominion of Rome.'

Elisa. Nor don't mean to.

Cato. These with black plaister stuck to them are of the Genus Simii or apes. The rest with togæ, but no beards, are, I suppose, of the Epicene class—dismiss me.

(*A Chord.*)

Cato. Abeo — (*chord.*) Excedo (*chord.*) Evado (*chord.*) Erumpo (four strides, one for each verb took him out with a sharp and pleasing effect.)

This ended the lecture and a dance of all ages and climes was proposed.

'I can't hop as you do now-a-days,' remonstrated the hoop 'I was taught to dance.'

'Grace was in all my steps,' said the courtier.

Said Caroline, 'Dance in your own way, dress in your own way, and let your neighbours have their way—that is the best way!'

A dance was then played with no very marked accent; and mighty pleasant it was to see couples polking, couples gavotting with all the superstition of antiquated grace, and waltzes and jigs and tarantula; the sanctified solemnity with which polite people frisk was for this once exchanged for sly gravity and little bursts of merriment. Boom! went a gun at sea.

The great steamer was starting for England.

It was a brilliant moonlight.

There was a general move to the supper-room, which had four windows looking seaward.

One old lady lingered a moment to convey to her host her opinion of the lecture.

'You are a very clever young lady, your lecture was very ingenious.'

'I am fortunate in your friendly consideration of it, madam,' said Caroline.

'The women in trousers were funny.'

'If it gave my friends a smile, Miss Ruth—'

'It will make Bloomers I believe—it was as good as a play Miss Courtenay; and I shall never enter your house again madam!' with this conclusion Miss Ruth became a vertical rod and marched off.

The next moment a servant brought Caroline a letter; she opened it. A smile with which she was listening to Fitzpatrick's admiration became a stone smile as her eyes fixed themselves on the paper. She gave a cry like one wounded, and, stretching out her hands with a tender helplessness that at once gave the

lie to her dress, she sank insensible into Mr. Fitzpatrick's arms.

The steamboat was taking Reginald past her window to England.

CHAPTER V.

SEVERAL months after this event, a young gentleman was seated in a study, book in hand, but by no effort could he give his mind to the book; he sighed, turned the leaves and gave it up in despair! this was Reginald Seymour, whose offended dignity and delicacy had borne him stiffly up for five months, but could support him no longer.

He had now had leisure to remember the many high qualities of her, whose one fault he had thought unpardonable. He had flung away a jewel for a single flaw—jewels are rare—he began to think he had been a fool, and to know he was wretched.

What was to be done? he had been silent so long that now he was ashamed to write; and when he had with a great struggle determined to make the first overtures, a letter from his sister had given him a mysterious hint that it would now be too late to attempt an accommodation.

Reginald was not one of those who babble their griefs, and cure themselves in ten days by tormenting all their friends.

He was silent, distracted, reserved.

His own family, who guessed the cause of his low spirits, respected him too much to approach the subject, or to let strangers into the secret.

They left him in peaceable enjoyment of his misery.

He thanked them in his heart, and availed himself to the full of their kind permission.

He sat in a room, whose windows looked on Courtenay Court, and in that room, in the company of the immortal dead—s'ennuyait.

One of these painful reveries was interrupted by a visitor, an old gentleman in black gaiters and a white head; the Reverend James Tremaine, perpetual curate of Conyton. An old and true friend of both houses, and Reginald's tutor for many years, Mr. Tremaine had not seen his depression without interest. He was acquainted with the cause. The Seymours had few secrets from him.

Certain features in every story vary according to the side we hear it from; and Mr. Tremaine secretly congratulated Reginald on his escape from a strong-minded woman: he called not to keep his pupil's mind fixed on the subject, but on the contrary to divert him from it.

After noticing with regret the young man's depression, he asked permission to be his physician.

'I see,' said he, 'what it is—you want some fixed intellectual pursuit. Will you allow me to recommend you one?'

'As many as you like, dear sir,' said Reginald, 'for I am wearied of my life—I have nothing to do,' added he, thinking to throw dust in his mentor's eyes.

Mr. Tremaine took his cue, and then and there proposed to his late pupil's attention an interesting pursuit, suited to that part of the country—geology. 'It is a science,' said he, 'which lifts you out of this ignorant present, and transports you into various stages of this earth's existence: you learn on its threshhold what a mushroom in this world's great story is the author of the pyramids.

'You find that the earth was red hot for millions of years, and spouted liquid stone like a whale: in that stone look for no sign of vegetation, and still fewer of life. Then for millions of years the heat of its upper crust has been cooling, and water depositing rubbish which has coagulated into stone; and in this stratified stone you shall find things, that lived or grew very late in the world's history, in fact within a few million years of mammoths, who precede man by a few thousand years only, at least I think so, since the flesh of mammoths has been found in ice in our own day, and was eaten by our contemporaries the wolves.'

The old gentleman then hinted with a twinkle of the eye, that this science has also its prose; that, by breaking stones with iron in them, men have repaired their own shattered fortunes: that coal, silver, iron and even gold are as common as dirt, though not quite so easy to come at, and that geology really mastered,

would teach its proficient the signs of their presence; brief, how much better to circulate over the face of Devonshire with hammer and book, than be a prey to weariness without the excuse of work!!

Mr. Tremaine had not observed what we have; that snobs in fustian jackets without a single polysyllable to their tongues find all the gold and all the coal that is found; and science finds the crustaceonidunculæ.

Botany Mr. Tremaine recommended only as a relaxation of the more useful study; at the same time he hinted it was amusing to be able to classify plants, not by their properties but their petals, and to call everything by its long name that belongs to twenty other things as well, instead of knowing each by its own name as the vulgar unscientific do.

'Oh, le plaisant projet!' exclaims my reader, 'he knows the boy is in love and prescribes geology and botany.'

Well, is not one folly best cured by another? But is this sort of thing folly? especially in a youth born to fortune.

Experience is our only safe guide in all things—and experience proves that geology and botany are roads to happiness.

Other things are constantly tried in vain—these seldom fail.

Ambition is raging agitation followed by bitter disappointment.

Wit, an unruly engine, recoils on him that plays it.

Politics, love, theology, art, are full of thorns; but when you see a man perched like a crow on a rock chipping it, you see a happy dog. You who are on the look out for beauty, find irregular features or lack lustre dolls—you who love wit are brained with puns or ill nature, the two forms of wit that exist out of books. But the hammerist can jump out of his gig at any turn of the road and find that which his soul desires—the meanest stone a boy throws at a robin is millions of years older than the Farnese Hercules, and has a history as well as a sermon.

Stones are curious things. If a man is paid for breaking them, he is wretched; but if he can bring his mind to do it gratis he is at the summit of content! With these men life is a felicitous dream—they are not subject to low spirits like other men; they smile away their human day; and when they are to die they don't seem to mind so very much. Can they take anything easy by giving it one of their hard names—is the grave to them a cretaceous, or argillaceous, or ferrugineous bed, I beg their pardon—stratum?

No! It is because their hobbies have been innocent: and other men's hobbies are so apt to be vicious.

These have broken stones while egotists have been breaking human hearts.

Mr. Tremaine was enlarging on such topics with more eloquence and method than I, and his patient became animated with a sudden expression of surprise, hope, joy.

He looked out of the window.

The old gentleman looked too. 'Ah,' cried he, 'I see! Yes Reginald! that is better than science and beyond the power of art.'

'Yes!' said Reginald.

'That glorious breadth of golden sunlight that streams across that foliage,' continued the savant.

'Sunshine and leaves?' cried Reginald, 'it is something of more importance I am looking at.'

'More importance than sunshine,' said the old gentleman faintly.

'YES! SEE! LOOK!—THE SMOKE FROM THOSE CHIMNEYS!'

Mr. Tremaine looked; and Courtenay Court was smoking from a dozen chimneys at once. He was taken off his guard.

'She must be come home,' said he, 'or coming!!! (aside) plague take her!'

Reginald seized him by the hand.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. TREMAINE was right. Caroline was expected at Courtenay Court. The next day she arrived bringing Miss Seymour, who went to her father's house.

They had been escorted across the water by Mr. Fitzpatrick; but he remained in town. Before they left New York this gentleman had declared himself Caroline's professed admirer. Caroline asked him with

some archness which he loved best her or Miss Seymour. The question staggered him for a moment, so he said, 'Can you ask?' Cross-examined however he was brought to this, that he liked Caroline a shade better than Harriet.

During the voyage home Mr. Fitzpatrick lost a portion of his gaiety, and was seen at times to be grave and perplexed; novel phenomenon.

Harriet Seymour and Caroline had got over their tiff, and indeed Harriet for months past had sided rather with her friend than her brother. 'Caroline was wrong,' said she, 'but Reginald was more wrong. He ought to have forgiven a woman a caprice.' Harriet therefore spent the evening of her arrival at home; but early next morning she rode over to Courtenay Court to bear her friend company. She was the more eager to lend her countenance because others were so hard upon her.

For the evening of her arrival Caroline was discussed at Seymour Hall. The old people including Mr. Tremaine spoke of her with horror: tomboy, vixen, and even strong minded woman, from which heaven defend us males! They congratulated themselves and Reginald on his escape from her. Reginald maintained a dogged silence. But when Harriet stoutly defended his late sweetheart, and declared that her faults were only on the surface, he cast a look of gratitude at her, that she caught and comprehended. Her defence was not quite lost on others. Mr. Tremaine asked her

quietly, 'Has Miss Courtenay really anything good about her?' 'Judge for yourself,' replied Harriet, with a toss of the head. 'Call on her. She is your parishioner.'

'Humph! I don't like strong minded women. They say she can swim into the bargain; but I certainly shall call on her, and judge with my own eyes. Her father was a worthy man.'

To return, Caroline and Harriet were walking in the grounds of Courtenay Court, at some distance from the house. Harriet was lionizing the mistress, showing her her beauties, the famous old yew tree, the narrow but deep water that meandered through her grounds, and each admired view and nook. It was charming, and both ladies did loud admiration; and did not care a button for it all.

Harrt. Is Mr. Fitzpatrick coming to-day?

Carol. I don't know: what a curious bridge, it looks like a long gate. Shall we cross it?

Harrt. Not for the world, the water is ever so deep.

Carol. I did not mean to cross the water, only the bridge.

Harrt. But see how crazy it is! the wood is so old, nobody has lived here ever so long, and then it is so hard to keep on it too.

Caroline looked wistfully at the primitive bridge, 'If I had my Bloomer on, I would soon be over it,' said she, 'but this appendage would catch my feet and draggle in the water at every step.'

Harriet implored her friend never to mention that word again.

'Bloomer! it is the cause we are all unhappy.'

'What are *you* unhappy? what about? Oh he will be here to-day dear, ten to one.'

'Who? pray?'

'Mr. Fitzpatrick.'

'Mr. Fitzpatrick is your lover, not mine,' said Harriet, coloring all over.

'So he is. I forgot. Oh look at the tail of your gown—three straws, two sticks and such a long briar.'

Harrt. Put your foot on it dear. These lawyers are the plague of this county.

Carol. Lawyers?

Harrt. I forget, you don't know our country terms; we call these long briars lawyers; because when once they got hold of you—

Carol. I understand—all to be avoided by a little bloomer.

Harrt. Now Caroline don't. I wish the woman had never been born. Let us go into the shade.

An observer of the sex might have noticed the same languor, and the same restlessness in both these ladies, though one was Yankee and one English.

At last they fell into silence. It was Caroline who broke the silence. 'Nobody comes to welcome me or even sends. How hospitable these British are! If I had quarrelled with any one in their own country, and then they came to mine, I should be generous, I

should make that an excuse for holding out the hand, and being friends any way if I could be nothing more. But the people here are not of my mind. All the worse for them. Much I care. I shall go and see where they have buried my father, I don't believe he would have died if he had not come here, and then I shall go back home across the water, to my country, where men know how to quarrel ay and fight too, and then drop it when it is done with.' Thus spake the Yankee girl. The English girl colored up, but she did not answer back—except by turning brimming eyes and a look of gentle reproach on her.

On this, partly because she was unhappy, partly because this mild look pricked her great though wayward heart, the Yankee girl began to cry bitterly.

On this the English girl flung her arms round the Yankee girl's neck, and cried with her.

'Dearest, he loves you still.'

'Still! he never loved me Harriet. Oh no—he never loved me—oh, oh!'

'You forget; I have been home. I have seen him. He is pale—he is sad.'

'That is a c—c—comfort. I wish he was at d—d—death's door.'

'He is far more unhappy than you are.'

'I am so glad—I don't believe it.'

'You may believe it—I have seen it.'

At this moment a servant was seen approaching; he came up, touched his hat to Caroline with a world of

obsequiousness and informed her, the parson had called to see her and was in the drawing-room.

'The Parson?'

'The Reverend Mr. Tremaine, Miss.'

'A great friend of our family,' explained Harriet.

'Ah, tell me all about him as we go along.'

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Tremaine. Will she receive me in a Bloomer?

Harriet. I don't know—I hope not. She was decent a minute ago.

Tremaine. Perhaps she has gone to put one on.

Harriet gave a start, and had a misgiving, Caroline being a devil, 'Heaven forbid!' she cried. 'I will go and see.'

The next minute a young lady of singular beauty and grace glided into the room. She was dressed richly but very plainly. Mr. Tremaine looked at her with surprise. 'Are you Miss Courtenay?' She smiled sweetly and told him she was Miss Courtenay. She added that Mr. Tremaine was no stranger to her; she had often heard of him and his virtues in happier days. After that she thanked him for being the first to welcome her home.

'We shall all feel flattered at your calling it home Miss Courtenay; we must try and keep you here after that.'

In about ten minutes the intelligent young beauty had not only dissolved Mr. Tremaine's prejudices against her, but had substituted a strong prejudice in her favor.

'This quiet ladylike, dignified, gentle, amiable, beautiful, young woman, a tom-boy?' said he to himself. 'I don't believe it—it surpasses belief—it is false!'

There was a pause.

'Miss Courtenay,' began the old gentleman, 'your late father, during the short time he was among us, gained the respect of the whole county. I cannot help thinking you will be his successor in our esteem as well as in Courtenay Court.'

Miss Courtenay bowed with quiet dignity.

'The worst of it is we are an old fashioned people here in Devonshire. We are strait laced—ahem—in short—shall I be presuming too far on our short acquaintance if (pray give me credit for friendly motives). I ask permission to put you a question. But no, when I look at you—it is impossible.'

'What is impossible, sir?'

'That you can ever have,' and the old gentleman flushed a bit; 'by-the-by they say you can swim Miss Courtenay.'

'A little, not worth boasting of,' replied Caroline, modestly. 'I think I could make shift to swim across this room; if the sea was in it.'

'Oh no farther than that? well there is not much

harm in that. But they do say, you have done us the honor, ahem—to wear male habiliments—is that true?'

'Indeed Mr. Tremaine I have, let—me—see, I think it was at a fancy ball,—in my own house—at New York.' The words were said with assumed carelessness and candor.

'What, on no other occasion?'

'On no other public occasion—why?' enquired Caroline *so* innocently...

'Then really I think too much has been made of it. But you are said to advocate the Bloomer costume.'

'I have often advocated it, in words sir; but wearing it is a different matter you know.'

'Very different, very different indeed,' said Tremaine, hastily.

'I could not help advocating it; its adversaries argued so weakly against it. Shall I repeat their arguments, and my own?'

'If you please.'

Caroline, with the calm indifference of a judge, stated the usual arguments pro and con, and did not fail to dwell upon the trousers of Eastern women. Mr. Tremaine took her up.

'There is a flaw in your reasoning I think,' said he; 'those Eastern women distinguish themselves from men by a thick veil—they all wear a thick veil. It appears to me that the true argument against Bloomer has never been laid before you. It is this: in every civilized nation, the entire sexes are distinguished by

some marked costume. But Bloomer proposes that one third of the women should be at variance with the other two thirds.'

'Oh no sir, she is for dressing them all in Bloomers.'

'No, excuse me, how would old women, and fat women look in a Bloomer? How would young matrons look, at that period, when a woman is most a woman? No, the dress for women must clearly be some dress that becomes all women, at all times and occasions of life. There are plenty of boys of sixteen or seventeen, who could be dressed as women, and eclipse all the women in a ball room; but it would be indelicate and unmanly. You, with your youthful symmetrical figure, could eclipse most young men in their own habiliments: but it would be indelicate and unwomanly. Forgive me, I distress you.'

'No sir! but you convince me; and that is new to me. I admit this argument at once; and so I would have done six months ago; but no one had the intelligence to put the matter to me so,' said the sly thing.

'You seem to be a very reasonable young lady.'

'It is the only merit I have.'

'Permit me to contradict you again. Well then since the Bloomer difficulty is despatched, let me have the honor and the happiness of reconciling an honorable young man with the most charming young lady I have met with this many a day.'

The charming young lady froze directly.

'I will not affect to misunderstand you sir; but the difference between Mr. Seymour and myself lies deeper than this paltry dress: lies too deep for you to cure; the Bloomer was a mere pretext. Mr. Seymour did not love me.'

'Excuse me; I know better.'

'When we love people we forgive their faults: we forgive their virtues even.'

Mr. Tremaine looked at her with some surprise. The Devonshire ladies had not tongues so pointed as the fair Yankee's.

'He did love you—he does love you.'

'No Mr. Tremaine—no. Was that a fault for any one who really loved me, to quarrel out and out with a spoiled child for?' Here two tears, one real, the other crocodile, ran down her lovely cheeks and did the poor old gentleman's business entirely. 'He deserves to be hanged,' cried he, jumping up, in great haste, 'young fool. But he does love you tenderly, sincerely. He has never been happy since. He never will be happy till you are reconciled to him. He is waiting in great anxiety for my return. I shall tell him to ride over here and just—go—down—on—his—knees to you, and ask your forgiveness. Then will you forgive him?'

'I will try sir,' said Caroline, doubtfully; 'but he owes much to his advocate, and so you may tell him.'

'I shall be vain enough to tell him so you may depend;' and away went Mr. Tremaine, Caroline's

devoted champion through thick and thin from this hour. As he rode away, zeal and benevolence shining through him, Caroline said drily to herself 'I am your friend for life old boy.

Harriet came in and heard the news—she was delighted.

'Reginald will be here as fast as his horse's feet can carry him. Mr. Tremaine is all powerful in our house.'

'So I concluded from what you told me,' said Caroline demurely; 'and I—hem—will you excuse me for half-an-hour?'

'Yes, dear; you will find me on the lawn.'

Full three-quarters of an hour had elapsed and Harriet was beginning to wonder what had become of her friend when a musical laugh rang behind her—she turned round and beheld a sight that made her scream with terror and dismay—there stood Caroline in PROPRIA QUÆ MARIBUS as bold as brass.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE face of uneasy defiance Caroline got up when Harriet faced her was truly delicious.

'It is all over,' gasped Harriet, 'you are incurable.'

'He loves me,' explained Caroline; 'when I felt like giving in I didn't think he loved me.'

Harriet made no reply; she marched off stiffly. The Bloomer followed and tried to appease her by reminding her how hard it was to give in as long as a

chance of victory remained—'hard—it is impossible—it hurts!!!'

No answer.

'It was all that dear old man's fault for letting out that he loves me still, and he is unhappy; so then he is in my power, and I can't give in now—and I won't. No. Let us see whether it is me or my clothes he loves—ah, ah! Oh, my dear girl, here he comes; let me get behind you—oh dear I wish I hadn't.'

Sure enough Reginald was coming down to the other side of the stream.

Caroline got half behind Harriet.

Reginald came along the bridge to join them.

'I wish it would break down,' whined Caroline, 'then I'd run home, and I know what I would do.'

The words were out of her mouth and no more, when some portion of the rotten wood gave way and splash goes Reginald into the water.

Harriet screamed. Caroline laughed.

Her laughter was soon turned to dismay. Reginald sank; he came up and struggled towards the wood work, but in vain: the current had carried him a yard or two from it, and even that small space he could not recover. He was too proud to cry for help, but he was drowning.

'He can't swim,' cried Caroline, and she darted into the stream like a water spaniel. In two strokes she was beside him and seized him by the hair. One stroke took her to the remnant of the bridge, 'lay hold

of that Reginald,' she cried. He obeyed, and, while she swam ashore, he worked along the wooden bridge to the bank.

The moment she saw him safe, she began to laugh again; and then what does my lady do but set off running home full pelt before he could say a word to her. He followed her crying 'Caroline—Caroline!' It was no use—she was in her Bloomer and had the start, and ran like a doe.

'Oh Reginald, go home and change your clothes,' cried the tender Harriet.

'What, go home before I have thanked my guardian angel, my beloved?'

'Your guardian angel must change her clothes, and you must change yours—you will catch your death.'

'At least tell her she shall wear what she pleases, tell her—

'I will tell her nothing, come and tell it her yourself, frightening me so. Her Bloomer is spoilt for ever now, that is one comfort.'

Reginald ran to the stables, got his horse, gallopped home, dressed himself, and gallopped back, and came into Caroline's drawing-room open mouthed. 'Wear what you like dear Caroline; why you are in a gown! no matter—forgive me—oh forgive me—I have been ungrateful once—I never will again. My beloved, what did I not owe you enough before that you must save my life? Oh Caroline, one word; can the devotion of a life restore me the treasure I once had, and

trifled with—for what?' then he fell to kissing her hands and her gown. Then she, seeing him quite overcome, was all woman.

'Reginald,' she murmured, and sank upon his neck, all her strength of mind dissolving in tears and love.

'What did you say about Bloomer, Reginald dear?'

'I said you should wear what you liked, sweet one.'

'Ah then we are never to agree; for I mean to wear whatever you like.'

This was 'the way to take her,' one of that sort; they are to be made slaves of just as easily as the hen hearted ones. But ye mustn't show 'em the chain!!!

Afternoon came Fitz.

Caroline. Mr. Fitzpatrick, will you come here?

Fitz. "I will." An Irishman always consents, but never says "yes."

Carol. (With a twinkle in her eye) Will you do me a favor?

Fitz. I will.

Carol. Do you see that lady sitting there? (Harriet).

Fitz. (coloring) I do.

Carol. Go and marry her.

And she gave him a push that seemed less than a feather, but somehow it propelled Fitz. all across the room, and sent him down on his knees before Harriet. N.B. There were only these three in the room.

Mr. Tremaine married two couples in one day, Reginald and Caroline; Fitzpatrick and Harriet. I

ought to explain to those who have not seen it, that during the voyage Fitz. had discovered it was Harriet he loved a soupçon the best of the two.

At the wedding breakfast, arrayed in white, and adorned with wreaths, both the Yankee and the English beauty were intolerably lovely.

No one seemed more conscious of this double fact than Fitz. Caroline observed his looks and took occasion to say to him confidentially, "wouldn't you like to have married both ladies, now—come—tell the truth!!!"

'Indeed and I would,' replied the candid Celt, unconscious of any satire in the question.

America takes two hundred thousand English every year. We have got this one Yankee in return, and we mean to keep her.

A year after they had been married, she wanted to give her Bloomer to one of the stable-boys. 'What, the dress you saved my life in?' cried Reginald, 'I would not part with it to a prince, for the price of a king's ransom.'

Lads and lasses, this trifle is what I have called it 'a jeu d'esprit,' written for your amusement, and not intended to improve you, instruct you, or elevate your morals.

A thing not to be approved in general, but excused once in a way methinks.

——— neque semper arcum
Tendit Apollo.

FINIS.

ART:
A DRAMATIC TALE.

EARLY in the last century two young women were talking together in a large apartment, richly furnished. One of these was Susan, cousin and dependent of Mrs. Anne Oldfield; the other was a flower girl, whom that lady had fascinated by her scenic talent. The poor girl was but one of many persons over whom Mrs. Oldfield had cast a spell; and yet this actress had not reached the zenith of her reputation.

The town, which does not always know its own mind about actors, applauded one or two of her rivals more than her, and fancied it admired them more.

Oldfield was the woman (there is always one) who used the tones of nature upon the stage in that day; she ranted at times like her neighbours, but she never ranted out of tune like them; her declamation was nature, alias art, thundering; theirs was artifice raving: her treatment of words was as follows;—she mastered them in the tone of household speech; she then gradually built up these simple tones into a gorgeous edifice of music and meaning; but though dilated, heightened, and embellished, they never lost their original truth. Her rivals started from a lie,

so the higher they soared, the further they left truth behind them;—they do the same thing now pretty universally.

The public is a very good judge; and no judge at all of such matters: I will explain.

Let the stage voice and the dramatic voice,—the artificial and the artistic,—the bastard and the legitimate,—the false and the true, be kept apart upon separate stages, and there is no security that the public will not, as far as hands go, applaud the monotone or lie, more than the melodious truth. But set the lie and the truth side by side upon fair terms, and the public becomes what the critics of this particular art have never been—a critic; and stage bubbles, that have bubbled for years, are liable to burst in a single night.

Mrs. Oldfield was wise enough, even in her generation, to know that the public's powers of comparison require that the things to be compared shall be placed cheek by jowl before it; and this is why she had for some time manœuvered to play, foot to foot, against Mrs. Bracegirdle, the champion of the stage.

Bracegirdle, strong in position, tradition, face, figure, and many qualities of an actor, was by no means sorry of an opportunity to quench a rising rival; and thus the two ladies were to act together in the 'Rival Queens,' within a few days of our story.

Roxana . . . . . MRS. BRACEGIRDLE.
Statira . . . . . MRS. OLDFIELD.

The town, whose heart at that epoch was in the

theatre, awaited this singular struggle in a state of burning excitement we can no longer realise.

Susan Oldfield, first cousin of the tragedian, was a dramatic aspirant. Anne's success having travelled into the provinces, her aunt, Susan's mother, said to Susan, who was making a cream cheese, 'You go an' act too, lass!'

'I will,' said Susan, a-making of cream cheese.

Anne's mother remonstrated, 'She can't do it.'

'Why not, sister?' said Susan's mother, sharply.

Then ensued some reasoning.

'Anne,' said the tragedian's mother, 'was born clever. I can't account for it. She was always mimicking. She took off the exciseman, and the farmers, and her grandmother, and the very parson—how she used to make us laugh! Mimicking! why it was like a looking-glass, and the folk standing in front of it, and speaking behind it, all at one time; once I made her take me off; she was very loth, poor lass. I think she knew she could not do it so well as the rest; it wasn't like, though it made them all laugh more than the others; but the others were as like faggot to faggot. Now, Susan, she can't take off anything without 'tis the scald cream from the milk, and I've seen me beat her at that; I'm not bragging.'

To this piece of ratiocination, Susan's mother opposed the following—

'Talent is in the blood,' said she (this implies that great are all the the first cousins of the great).

Anne's mother might have weakened this by examples

at her own door, to wit, the exciseman, who was a clever fellow, and his son an ass. But she preferred keeping within her own line of argument, and as the ladies floated, by a law of their nature, away from that to which lawyers tend, an issue, they drifted divaguely over the great pacific ocean of feminine logic. At last a light shot into Susan's mamma: she found terra firma, *i.e.*, an argument too strong for refutation.

'Besides, Jane,' said she, 'I want your Susan to churn! So there's an end!'

Alas! she had underrated the rival disputant. Susan's mother took refuge in an argument equally irrefragable: she packed up the girl's things that night, and sent her off by coach to Anne next morning.

Susan arrived, told her story and her hopes on Anne's neck. Anne laughed, and made room for her on the third floor. The cousins went to the theatre that evening, the aspirant in front.

Susan passed through various emotions, and when Belvidera, 'gazed, turned giddy, raved and died,' she ran to the stage door, with some misgivings, whether she might not be wanted to lay her cousin out. In Anne's dressing room she found a laughing dame, who, whilst wiping off her rouge, told her she was a fool, and asked her rather sharply, 'how it went?'

'The people clapped their hands! I could have kissed them,' said Susan.

'As if I could not hear that, child,' said Anne. 'I want to know how many cried where you were.'

'Now, how can I tell you, cousin, when I could not see for crying myself?'

'You cried, did you? I am very glad of that!'

'La, cousin!'

'It does not prove much, but it proves more than their clapping of hands. You shall be my barber's block—you don't understand me—all the better—come home to supper.'

At supper, the tragedian made the dairy-maid tell her every little village event; and, in her turn, recalled all the rural personages; and, reviving the trick of her early youth, imitated their looks, manners, and sentiments, to the life.

She began with the exciseman, and ended with the curate—a white-headed old gentleman, all learning, piety, and simplicity. He had seen in this beautiful and gifted woman only a lamb that he was to lead up to heaven—please God.

The naughtiest things we do are sure to be the cleverest, and this imitation made Susan laugh more than the others.

But in the midst of it, the mimic suddenly paused, and her eye seemed to turn inwards; she was quite silent for a moment.

Ah! Oldfield, in that one moment, I am sure your heart has drunk many a past year. It is away to the banks of Trent, to grass and flowers, and days of innocence, to church-bells and a cottage porch, and your mother's bosom, my poor woman—princess of the stage.

She faltered out, 'But he was a good man. Oh! yes! yes! yes! he was a good man; he admired me more than he would now! None like him shine on my path now.' And she burst into a fit of crying.

Susan cried with her, without in the least knowing what was the matter. And these most dissimilar beings soon learned to love one another. The next day Anne took the gauge of Susan's entire intellects; and, by way of comment on the text of Susan, connected her with dramatic poetry as Mrs. Oldfield's dresser.

Susan then had been installed about three months, when she was holding that conversation with the flower girl, which I have too long interrupted.

'It is an odd thing to say, but I think you are in love with my cousin Anne.'

'I dont know,' was the answer. 'I am drawn to her by something I cannot resist: I followed her home for three months before I spoke to you. Will she not be angry at my presumption?'

'La! Of course not; it is not as if you were one of those impudent men that follow her about, and slip notes into every mortal thing—her carriage, her prayer-book.'

Now Susan happened to be laying out the new dress for Statira, which had just come in; and, in a manner singularly apropos, no less than two nice little notes fell out of it as she spoke.

The girls looked at them, as they lay on the floor, like deer looking ascaunt at a lap-dog.

'Oh!' said the votary of Flora; 'they ought to be ashamed.'

'So they ought,' cried Susan. 'I'd say nothing,' added she, 'if some of them were for me. But I shall have them when I am an actress.'

'Are you to be that? Ah! you will never be like *her!*'

'Why not? She is only my mother's sister's daughter, bless you. Anne was only a country lass like me at first starting, and that is why my mother sent me here, because when talent is in a family, don't let one churn all the butter, says she.'

'But can you act?' interposed the other.

'Can't I,' was the answer.

'"His fame survives the world in deathless story,
Nor heaven and earth combined can match his glory."'

These lines, which in our day, would be thought a leetle hyperbolical, Susan recited with gestures equally supernatural.

'Bless you,' added she, complacently; 'I could act fast enough, if I could but get the words off. Can you read?'

'Yes!'

'Handwriting? Tell the truth now!'

'Yes! I can indeed.'

'Handwriting is hard, is it not?' said Susan; 'but a part beats all: did you ever see a part?'

'No!'

'Well, I'll tell ye, girl! there comes a great scratch, and then some words: but don't you go for to say those words, because they belong to another gentleman, and he mightn't like it. Then you come in, and then another scratch. And I declare it would puzzle Old Scratch to clear the curds from the whey—'

Susan suddenly interrupted herself, for she had caught sight of a lady slowly approaching from an adjoining room, the door of which was open. 'Hush!' cried Susan; 'here she is! alack she is not well! Oh, dear! she is far from well!' And, in point of fact, the lady slowly entered the apartment, labouring visibly under a weight of disease. The poor flower-girl, naturally thinking this no time for her introduction, dropped a bouquet on the table, and retreated precipitately from the den of the sick lioness.

Then the lady opened her lips, and faltered forth the following sentence.—

'I go no further, let me rest here, Œnone!'

'Do, cousin!' said Susan, consolingly

'I droop, I sink, my strength abandons me!' said the poor invalid.

'Here's a chair for y' Anne,' cried Susan. 'What is the matter?'

On this, the other fixing her filmy eyes upon her, explained slowly and faintly, that, 'Her eyes were dazzled with returning day; her trembling limbs refused their wonted stay.'

'Ah!' sighed she, and tottered towards the chair.

'She's going to faint—she's going to faint!' cried poor Susan. 'Oh, dear! Here, quick! smell to this, Anne.'

'That will do, then,' said the other, in a hard, unfeeling tone. 'I am fortunate to have satisfied your judgment, madam,' added she.

Susan stood petrified, in the act of lunging with the smelling-bottle.

'That is the way I come on in that scene,' explained Mrs. Oldfield, yawning in Susan's sympathetic face.

'Acting, by jingo!' screamed Susan. 'You ought to be ashamed, I thought you were a dead woman. I wish you wouldn't,' cried she, flying at her like a hen; 'tormenting us at home, when there's nobody to see.'

'It is my system—I aim at truth. You are unsophisticated, and I experiment on you,' was the cool excuse.

'Cousin, when am *I* to be an actress?' inquired Susan.

'After fifteen years' labour, perhaps,' was the encouraging response.

'Labour! I thought it was all in—spi—ration!'

'Many think so, and find their error. Labour and Art are the foundation—Inspiration is the result.'

'O Anne,' cried Susan, 'now do tell me your feelings in the theatre.'

'Well, Susan, first, I cast my eyes around, and try to count the house.'

'No, no, Anne, I don't mean that.'

'Well, then, child, at times upon the scene—mind, I say at times—the present does fade from my soul, and the great past lives and burns again; the boards seem buoyant air beneath me, child; that sea of English heads floats like a dream before me, and I breathe old Greece and Rome. I ride on the whirlwind of the poet's words, and waive my sceptre like a queen—ay, and a queen I am!—for kings govern millions of bodies, but I sway a thousand hearts! But, to tell the truth, Susan, when all is over, I sink back to woman—and often my mind goes home, dear, to our native town, where Trent glides so calmly through the meadows. I pine to be by his side, far from the dust of the scene, and the din of life—to take the riches of my heart from flatterers, strangers, and the world, and give them all, all, to one faithful heart, large, full, and loving as my own! Where's my dress for Statira, hussy?' She snapped this last with a marvellous quick change of key, and a sudden sharpness of tone peculiar to actresses when stage dresses are in question.

'Here it is. Oh! isn't it superb?'

'Yes, it is superb,' said Oldfield drily, 'velvet, satin, and ostrich-feathers, for an Eastern queen. The same costume for Belvidera, Statira, Clytemnestra, and Mrs. Dobbs. O prejudice! prejudice! The stage has always been fortified against common sense! Velvet Greeks, periwigged Romans—the audience mingling with the scene—past and present blundered together! English fops in the Roman forum, taking snuff under a

Roman matron's nose (that's me), and cackling out that she does it nothing like (no more she does)—nothing like Peggy Porteous—whose merit was, that she died thirty years ago, whose merit would have been greater had she died fifty years ago, and much greater still had she never lived at all.'

Here Susan offered her half-a-dozen letters, including the smuggled notes; but the sweet-tempered soul (being for the moment in her tantrums) would not look at them. 'I know what they are,' said she, 'Vanity, in marvellous thin disguises; my flatterers are so eloquent, that they will persuade me into marrying poor old Mannering—every morning he writes me four pages, and, tells me my duty; every evening he neglects his own and goes to the theatre, which is unbecoming his age, I think.'

'He looks a very wise gentleman,' observed Susan.

'He does,' was the rejoinder, 'but his folly reconciles me in some degree to his wisdom; so, mark my words, I shall marry my silly sage. There, burn all the rest but his—no! don't burn the letter in verse.'

'In verse?'

'Yes! I won't have him burnt either—for he loves me, poor boy—find it, Susan; he never misses a day. I think I should like to know that one.'

'I think this is it,' said Susan.

'Then read it out expressively, whilst I mend this collar. So then I shall estimate your progress to the temple of Fame, ma'am.'

It is not easy to do justice on paper to Susan's recitative; but, in fact, she read it much as school-boys scan, and what she read to her cousin for a poet's love, hopped thus:—

'"Excŭse—mĕ dĕar—ĕst frĭend—ĭf I—shoŭld appēar
Tŏŏ prĕss—ĭng bŭt—ŭt mў—yeărs ōne—hăs nŏt
Much tĭme—tŏ lōse—ănd yŏur—gŏŏd sēnse—I fēĕl—"'

'My good sense!' cried Mrs. Oldfield, 'how can that be poetry?'

'It is poetry, I know,' remonstrated Susan. 'See, cousin, it's all of a length.'

'All of a length with your wit—that is the Mannering prose.'

'Drat them, if they write in lines, how is one to know their prose from their verse?' said Susan spitefully.

'I'll tell you, Susan,' said the other soothingly, 'their prose is something as like Mannering as can be, their verse is something in this style:

'"You were not made to live from age to age;
The dairy yawns for you—and not the stage!"

'He! he!'

She found what she sought, and reading out herself the unknown writer's verses, she said, with some feminine complacency, 'Yes this is a heart I have really penetrated.'

'I've penetrated one too,' said Susan.

'Indeed!' was the reply; 'how did you contrive that—not with the spit, I hope?'

Thus encouraged, Susan delivered herself most volubly of a secret that had long burned in her. She

proceeded to relate how she observed a young gentleman always standing by the stage-door as they got into their chariot, and when they reached home, somehow he was always standing there too. 'It was not for you, this one,' said Susan, hastily, 'because you are so wrapped up, he could not see you.' Then she told her cousin how, once when they were walking separately, this same young gentleman had said to her most tenderly, 'Madam, you are in the service of Mrs. Oldfield?' and, on another occasion, he had got as far as 'Madam,' when, unfortunately, her cousin looked round, and he vanished. Susan, then throwing off the remains of her reserve, and clasping her hands together, confessed she admired him as much as he did her. Susan gave this reason for her affection, 'He is, for all the world, like one of the young tragedy princes, and you know what ducks they are.'

'I do, to my cost,' was the caustic reply. 'I wish, instead of talking about this silly lover of yours, who must be a fool, or he would have made a fool of you long ago, you would find out who is the brave young gentleman who risked his life for me last month. Now I think of it, I am quite interested in him.'

'Risked his life!—and you never told me, Anne!'

'Robert told you, of course.'

'No, indeed'

'Did he not?—then I will tell you the whole story. You have heard me speak of the Duchess of Tadcaster?'

'No, cousin, never.'

'I wonder at that! Well, she and Lady Betty Bertie and I used to stroll in Richmond Park with our arms round one another's waists, like the Graces, more or less, and kiss one another, ugh! and swear a deathless friendship, like liars and fools as we are. But her Grace of Tadcaster had never anything to do, and I had my business: so I could not always be plagued with her; so for this, the little idiot now aspires to my enmity, and knowing none but the most vulgar ways of showing a sentiment, she bids her coachman drive her empty carriage against mine, containing me. Child, I thought the world was at an end: the glasses were broken, the wheels locked, and all my little sins began to appear such big ones to me; and the *brute* kept whipping the *horses*, and they plunged so horribly, when a brave young gentleman sprang to their heads, tore them away, and gave her nasty coachman such a caning.' Here, Oldfield clenched a charming white fist; then lifting up her eyes, she said tenderly, 'Heaven grant no harm befell him afterwards, for I drove off, and left him to his fate!'

Charming sensibility! an actress's!

In return for this anecdote, Susan was about to communicate some further particulars on the subject which occupied all her secret thoughts, when she was interrupted by a noise and scuffle in the ante-room, high above which were heard the loud, harsh tones of a stranger's voice, exclaiming, 'but I tell ye I will see her, ye saucy Jack.'

Before this personage bursts upon Mrs. Oldfield, and the rest of us, I must go back and take up the other end of my knot in the ancient town of Coventry.

Nathan Oldworthy dwelt there; a flourishing attorney; he had been a clerk; he came to be the master of clerks; his own ambition was satisfied; but his son Alexander, a youth of parts, became the centre of a second ambition. Alexander was to embrace the higher branch of the legal profession; was to be first, pleader, then barrister, then King's counsel—lastly, a judge; and contemporaneously with this final distinction, the old attorney was to sing 'Nunc Dimittis,' and 'Capias' no more.

Bystanders are obliging enough to laugh at such schemes; but why? The heart is given to them, and they are no laughing matter to those who form them: such schemes destroyed, the flavour is taken out of human lives.

When Nathan sent his son to London, it was a proud, though a sad day for him; hitherto he had looked upon their parting merely as the first step of a glorious ladder, but when the coach took young Alexander out of sight, the father found how much he loved him, and paced very, very slowly home, while Alexander glided contentedly on towards London.

Now, 'London' means a different thing to every one of us: to one, it is the Temple of Commerce; to another, of Themis; to a third, of Thespis; and to a fourth, of the Paphian Venus, and so on, because we

are all much narrower than men ought to be. To Nathan Oldworthy it was the sacred spot where grin the courts of law. To Alexander it was the sacred spot where (being from the country) he thought to find the nine Muses in bodily presence—his favourite Melpomene at their head. Nathan knew next to nothing about his own son, a not uncommon arrangement. Alexander, upon the whole, rather loathed law, and adored poetry. In those days youth had not learned to 'frown in a glass, and write odes to despair,' and be dubbed a duck by tender beauty confounding sulks with sorrow. Alexander had to woo the Muse clandestinely, and so wooed her sincerely. He went with a manuscript tragedy in his pocket, called 'Berenice,' which he had re-written and re-shaped three several times; with a head full of ideas, and a heart tuned to truth, beauty, and goodness. Arrived there, he was installed in the neighbourhood, and under the secret surveillance of his father's friend, Timothy Bateman, Solicitor, of Gray's Inn.

If you had asked Alexander Oldworthy, upon the coach, who is the greatest of mankind, his answer would have been instantaneous; 'a true poet!' But the first evening he spent in London raised a doubt of this in his mind, for he discovered a being brighter, nobler, truer, greater than even a poet.

At four Alexander reached London. At five he was in his first theatre.

That sense of the beautiful, which belongs to genius

made him see beauty in the semi-circular sweep of the glowing boxes; in gilt ornaments glorious with light, and, above all, in human beings gaily dressed, and radiant with expectation. And all these things are beautiful; only gross, rustic senses cannot see it, and blunted town senses can see it no longer.

Before the play began, music attacked him on another side; and all combined with youth and novelty to raise him to a high key of intellectual enjoyment; and when the ample curtain rose slowly and majestically upon Mr. Otway's tragedy of 'Venice Preserved,' it was an era in this young life.

Poetry rose from the dead before his eyes this night. She lay no longer entombed in print. She floated around the scene, ethereal, but palpable. She breathed and burned in heroic shapes, and godlike tones, and looks of fire.

Presently, there glided among the other figures one that by enchantment seized the poet's eye, and made all that his predecessors had ever writ in praise of grace and beauty seem tame by comparison.

She spoke, and his frame vibrated to this voice. All his senses drank in her great perfections, and he thrilled with wonder and enthusiastic joy that this our earth contained such a being. He seemed to see the Eve of Milton with Madonna's glory crowning her head, and immortal music gushing from her lips.

The lady was Mrs. Oldfield—the Belvidera of the play.

Alexander thought he knew 'Venice Preserved' before this; but he found, as the greatest wits must submit to discover, that in the closet a good play is but the corpse of a play; the stage gives it life. (The printed words of a play are about one-third of a play; the tones and varying melodies of beautiful and artful speech are another third; and the business, gesture, and that great visible story, the expression of the speaking, and the dumb play of the silent, actors, is another third.)

Belvidera's voice, full, sweet, rich, piercing, and melodious, and still in its vast compass true to the varying sentiment of all she uttered, seemed to impregnate every line with double meaning, and treble beauty. Her author dilated into giant size and godlike beauty at the touch of that voice. And when she was silent she still spoke to Alexander's eye, for her face was more eloquent than vulgar tongues are. Her dumb-play from the first to the last moment of the scene was in as high a key as her elocution. Had she not spoken one single word still she would have written in the air by the side of Otway's syllables a great pictorial narrative, that filled all the chinks of his sketch with most rare and excellent colours of true flesh tint, and made that sketch a picture.

Here was a new art for our poet; and, as by that just arrangement which pervades the universe, 'acting' is the most triumphant of all the arts to compensate it for being the most evanescent, what wonder that

he thrilled beneath its magic, and worshipped its priestess.

He went home filled with a new sense of being—all seemed cold, dark, and tame, until he could return and see this poetess-orator-witch and her enchantments once more.

In those days they varied the entertainments in London almost as they do in the provinces now; and Alexander, who went to the theatre six nights a week, saw Mrs. Oldfield's beauty and talent in many shapes. Her power of distinct personation was very great. Her Andromache, her Ismena, and Belvidera were all different beings. Also each of her tragic personations left upon the mind a type. One night young Oldworthy saw majesty, another tenderness, another fiery passion, personified and embodied in a poetic creation.

But a fresh surprise was in store for him: the next week comedy happened to be in the ascendant; and Mrs. Oldfield, whose *entrée* in character was always the key-note of her personation, sprang upon the stage as Lady Townley, and in a moment the air seemed to fill with singing birds that chirped the pleasures of youth, beauty, and fashion in notes that sparkled like diamonds, stars, and prisms. Her genuine gushing gaiety warmed the coldest and cheered the forlornest heart. Nor was she less charming in the last act, where Lady Townley's good sense being at last alarmed, and her good heart touched, she bowed her saucy head, and begged her lord's pardon, with tender

unaffected penitence. The tears stood thick in Alexander's eyes during that charming scene, where in a prose comedy the author has had the courage and the beauty to spread his wings and rise in a moment into verse with the rising sentiment.

To this succeeded 'Maria', in 'the Nonjuror' and 'Indiana,' in what the good souls of that day were pleased to call the comedy of 'the Conscious Lovers,' in the course of which comedy Indiana made Alexander weep more constantly, continuously, and copiously than in all the tragedies of the epoch he had as yet witnessed.

So now Alexander Oldworthy lived for the stage; and, as the pearl is a disease of the oyster, so this syren became Alexander's disease. The enthusiast lost his hold of real life. Real life became to him an *interlude*, and soon that followed which was to be expected, the poor novice who had begun by adoring the artist, ended by loving the woman, and he loved her like a novice and a poet; he looked into his own heart, confounded it with hers, and clothed her with every heroic quality. He believed her as great in mind, and as good in heart, as she was lovely in person, and he would have given poems to be permitted to kiss her dress, or to lay his neck for a moment under her foot. Burning to attract her attention, yet too humble and timid to make an open attempt, he had at last recourse to his own art. Every day he wrote verses upon her, and sent them to her house. Every night after the

play he watched at the stage door for a glimpse of her as she came out of the theatre to her carriage, and being lighter of foot than the carriage horses of his century, he generally managed to catch another glimpse of her as she stepped from her carriage into her own house.

But all this led to no results, and Alexander's heart was often very cold and sick. Whilst he sat at the play he was in Elysium; but when after seeing his divinity vanish he returned to his lodgings and looked at his attachment by the light of one candle, despondency fell like a weight of ice upon him, and he was miserable till he had written her some verses. The verses writ, he was miserable till play-time.

One night he stood as usual at the stage door after the performance watching for Mrs. Oldfield, who, in a general way, was accompanied by her cousin Susan. This night, however, she was alone; and, having seen her enter her chariot, Alexander was about to start for her house to see her get down from it, when suddenly another carriage came into contact with Mrs. Oldfield's. The collision was violent, and Mrs. Oldfield screamed with unaffected terror, at which scream Alexander sprang to the horses of the other carriage, and, seizing one of them just above the curb, drew him violently back. To his surprise, instead of co-operating with him, the adverse coachman whipped both his horses, and, whether by accident or design, the lash fell twice on Alexander. Jehu never made a worse investment of whipcord. The young man drew himself back upon

the pavement, and sprang with a single bound upon the near horse's quarters; from thence to the coach-box. Contemporaneously with his arrival there he knocked the coachman out of his seat on to the roof of his carriage, and then seized his whip, broke it in one moment into a stick, and belaboured the prostrate charioteer till the blood poured from him in torrents. Then springing to the ground with one bound he turned the horses' heads, threshed them with the mutilated whip, and off they trotted gently home.

Alexander ran to Mrs. Oldfield's carriage-window, his cheeks burning, his eyes blazing. 'They are gone, madam,' said he, with rough timidity. The actress looked at him, and smiled on him, and said, 'So I see, sir, and I am much obleeged to you.' She was then about to draw back to her corner, but suddenly she reflected, and half beckoning Alexander, who had drawn back, she said, 'My dear, learn for me whose carriage that was.' Alexander turned to gain the information, but it was volunteered by one of the bystanders.

'It is the Duchess of Tadcaster's, Mrs. Oldfield.'

'Ah!' cried Mrs. Oldfield, 'the little wretch!' (this polite phrase she uttered with a most majestic force of sovereign contempt); 'thank you, sir; bid Robert drive me home, my child,' (this to Alexander), on which a bystander sang out,—'You are to drive home, Robert,—Buckingham Gate, the corner house.'

At this sally Mrs. Oldfield smiled with perfect com-

posure, but did not look at the speaker. As the carriage moved she leaned gently forward, and kissed her hand like a queen to Alexander, then nestled into her corner and went to sleep.

Alexander did nothing of the sort that night. He went home on wings. He could not go in. He walked up and down before his door three hours, before he could go to so vulgar a thing as bed. As a lover will read over fifty times six lines of love from the beloved hand, so Alexander acted over and over the little scene of this night, and dwelt on every tone, word, look, and gesture of the great creature who had at last spoken to him, smiled on him, thanked him. Oh! how happy he was, he could hardly realize his bliss. 'My dear;' but had not his ears deceived him—had she really called him 'my dear,' and what was he to understand by so unexpected an address; was it on account of the service he had just done her, or might he venture to hope she had noticed his face in the theatre, sitting, as he always did, in one place, at the side of the second row of the pit? but no! he rejected that as impossible. Whatever she meant by it, his blood was at her service as well as his heart. He blessed her with tears in his eyes for using such heavenly words to him in any sense—'my dear,' and 'my child.' He framed these words in his heart.

Alas! he little thought that 'my dear' meant literally nothing—he was not aware that calling every living creature 'my dear' is one of the nasty

little tricks of the stage—like their swearing without anger, and their shovelling snuff into their nose without intermission, in the innocent hope of making every sentence intellectual, by a dirty thing done mechanically, and not intellectually. As for 'my child,' that was better—that was, at least, a trick of the lady's own, partly caught from her French acquaintances.

For some days Alexander was in heaven. He fell upon his tragedy, he altered it by the light the stage had given him; above all, he heightened and improved the heroine, he touched her, and retouched her with the colours of Oldfield—and this done, with trembling hands, he wrapped it in brown paper, addressed it, and left it at her own house, and no sooner had Susan's hand touched it, than he fled like a guilty thing.

You see it was his first love—and she he loved seemed more than mortal to him.

And now came a reaction. Days and days rolled by, and no more adventures came, no means of making acquaintance with one so high above his reach.

He was still at the stage door, but she did not seem to recognise him, and he dared not recall himself to her recollection. His organisation was delicate—he began to fret and lose his sleep, and at last his pallor and listlessness attracted the not very keen eye of Timothy Bateman. Mr. Bateman asked him twenty times if anything was the matter—twenty times he answered, 'No!' At last, good, worthy, commonplace Bateman, after dinner and deep thought, said

one day, 'Alexander, I've found out what it is.' Alexander started.

'Money melts in London: yours is gone quicker than you thought it would;—my poor lad, don't you fret. I've got twenty pounds to spare, here 'tis. Your father will never know. I've been young as well as you.' Alexander grasped the good old fellow's hand and pressed it to his heart. He never looked at the note, but he looked, half tenderly, half wildly, into the old man's eyes.

Bateman read this look aright—'Ay, out with it, young man,' he cried, 'never keep a grief locked up in your heart, whilst you have a friend that will listen to it, that is an old man's advice.'

On this poor Alexander's story gushed forth. He told Bateman the facts I have told you, only his soul, and all the feelings he had gone through gushed from his heart of hearts. They sat till one in the morning. and often as the young heart laid bare its enthusiasm, its youth, its anguish, the dry old lawyer found out there was a soft bit left in his own, that sent the woman to the door of his eyes, for Alexander told his story differently, and I think on the whole better, than I do. I will just indicate *one* difference between us two as narrators—he told it like blood and fire, I tell it like criticism and ice, and be hanged to me.

Perhaps, had Alexander told the tale as I do, Bateman, man of the world, would have sneered at him, or sternly advised him to quit this folly and whim; but as

it was, Bateman was touched, and mingled pity with good, gentle, but firm advice, and poor Alexander was grateful. The poet revered the common-place good man, as a poet ought, and humbly prayed him to save him by his wisdom. He owned that he was mad,—that he was indulging a hopeless passion, that he knew the great tragedian, courted by the noble and rich of the land, would never condescend, even to an acquaintance with him. And, bursting into a passion of tears, 'Oh! good Mr. Bateman,' cried he, 'the most unfortunate hour of my life was that in which I first saw her, for she will be my death, for she will never permit me to live for her, and without her life is intolerable to me.'

This last feature decided Timothy Bateman; the next morning he wrote to Nathan Oldworthy a full account of all. 'Come up, and take him home again, for heaven's sake.'

It fell like a thunderbolt on the poor father, but he moved promptly: in two hours he was on the road to London.

Arrived there, he straight invaded Alexander. The poet, luckily for himself, was not at home. He then went to Bateman, he was in a towering passion.

The old puritanical leaven was scotched, but not killed, in Coventry.

In a general way, Nathan looked on love as no worse than one of the Evil One's many snares, to divert youth from law—but, love of an actress! If you had asked Coventry whether the Play House or the Public

House ruins the manners, morality, and intellect of England, Coventry was capable of answering—'The Play House.' He raged against the fool and the jade, as he succinctly, and not inaptly, described a dramatic poet and an actress.

His friend endeavoured to stop the current of his wrath, in vain; the attempt only diverted its larger current from Alexander to the Syren who had fascinated him—in vain Bateman assured him that affairs had proceeded to no length between the parties: the other snubbed him, called him a fool, that knew nothing of the world, and assured him that if anything came of it, she should have nothing from the Oldworthys, but thirty pence per week, the parish allowance (Nathan's ideas of love were as primitive as Alexander's were poetic), and lastly, bouncing up, he announced that he was going to see the hussy, and force her to give up her Delilah designs.

At this, poor Bateman was in dismay; he represented to this mad bull, that Mrs. Oldfield was 'on the windy side of the law,' that there were no proofs she had done anything more than every woman would do, if she was clever enough, viz. turn every man's head; he next reminded him of her importance, and implored him at least to be prudent. 'My dear friend,' said he, 'there are at least a score of gentlemen in this town, who would pass their swords through an old attorney, as they would through a mad dog, only to have a smile or a compliment from this lady.'

This last argument was ill chosen. The old Puritan was game to the back-bone; he flung Mrs. Oldfield's champions a grim grin of defiance, and marched out to invade that lady, and save his offspring.

Now, the said Mrs. Oldfield, wishing to be very quiet, because she was preparing to play for the championship of the stage, and was studying Statira, had given her footman orders to admit no living soul, upon any pretence.

Oldworthy, who had heard in Coventry that people in London are always at home if their servants say they are out, pushed past the man; the man followed him remonstrating. When they reached the ante-chamber, he thought it was time to do more, so he laid his hand on the intruder's collar—then ensued a short but very brisk scuffle; the ladies heard, to their dismay, a sound as of a footman falling from the top to the bottom of a staircase; and the next moment, in Jack boots, splashed with travel, an immense hat of a fashion long gone by, his dark cheek flushed with anger, and his eyes shooting sombre lightning from under their thick brows, Nathan Oldworthy strode like wild-fire into the room.

Susan screamed, and Anne turned pale, but, recovering herself, she said, with a wonderful show of spirit, 'How dare you intrude on me?—Keep close to me, stupid!' was her trembling aside to Susan.

'I'm used to enter people's houses, whether they will or not,' was the gruff reply.

'Your business, sir?' said Mrs. Oldfield, with affected calmness.

'It is not fit for that child to hear,' was the answer.

Anne Oldfield was wonderfully intelligent, and even in this remark, she saw the man, if a barbarian, was not a ruffian. She looked towards Susan.

Susan interpreting her look, declined to leave her alone 'With, with—'

'A brute, I suppose,' said Nathan coarsely.

The artist measured the man with her eye.

'He who feels himself a brute is on the way to be a man,' said she, with genuine dignity; so saying, she sismissed Susan with a gesture.

'You are the play-acting woman, aren't you?' said he.

'I am the tragedian, sir,' replied she, 'whose time is precious.'

'I'll lose no time—I'm an attorney,—the first in Coventry. I'm Nathan Oldworthy—My son's education has been given him under my own eye—I taught him the customs of the country, and the civil law—He is to be a serjeant-at-law, and a serjeant-at-law he shall be.'

'I consent for one,' said Oldfield, demurely.

'And then we can play into one another's hands, as should be.'

'I have no opposition to offer to this pretty little scheme of the Old Somethings—father and son.'

'Oldworthys! no opposition! when he hasn't been

once to Westminster, and every night to the play-house.'

'Oh!' said the lady, 'I see! the old story.'

'The very day the poor boy came here,' resumed Nathan, 'there was a tragedy play; so, because a woman sighed and burned for sport, the fool goes home and sighs and burns in earnest, can't eat his victuals, flings away his prospects, and thinks of nothing but this Nance Oldfield.'

He uttered this appellation with rough contempt; and had the actress been a little one, this descent to Nance Oldfield would have mortified or enraged her. But its effect on the great Oldfield was different, and somewhat singular; she opened her lovely eyes on him.

'Nance Oldfield,' cried she, 'Oh! sir, nobody has called me that name, since I left my little native town.'

'Haven't they, though?' said the rough customer more gently, responding to her heavenly tones, rather than to the sentiment which he in no degree comprehended.

'No!' said Oldfield, with an ill-used Æolian-harp tone.

Here, the attorney began to suspect she was diverting him from the point, and with a curl of the lip, and a fine masculine contempt for all subterfuges—not on sheepskin,—'You had better say you do not know all this,' cried he.

'Not I,' was the reply. 'My good sir, your son

has left you to confide to me the secret of his attachment: you have discharged the commission, Sir Pandarus of Troy,' added she, with a world of malicious fun in her jewel-like eye.

'Nathan Oldworthy of Coventry, I tell ye!' put in the angry sire.

'And it is now my duty to put some questions to you,' resumed the actress. 'Is your son handsome?' said she, in a sly half whisper.

'Is not he?' answered gaunt simplicity, 'and well built too—he is like me they say.'

'There is a point on which I am very particular—Has he nice teeth?—upon your honour, now.'

'White as milk, ma'am; and a smile that warms your heart up; fresh colour;—there's not such a lad in Coventry.' Here the old boy caught sight of a certain poetical epistle which, if you remember, was in Mrs. Oldfield's hands.

'And pray, madam,' said he, with smooth craft, 'does Alexander Oldworthy never write to you?'

'Never,' was her answer.

'She says never!' thundered Nathan, 'and there is his letter in her very hand,—a superb handwriting; what a waste of talent to write to you with it, instead of engrossing; what does the fool say?' and he snatched the letter rudely from her, and read out poor Alexander, with the lungs of a Stentor.

Gracious me; if I was puzzled to show the reader how Susan read the Mannering prose, how on earth

shall I make him hear and see Oldworthy Père read Oldworthy Fils his rhymes; but I will attempt a faint adumbration, wherein Glorious Apollo! from on high befriend us!

'My soul hangs trembling,'—(full stop.) 'On that magic voice, grieves with your woe,'—(full stop.) 'Exults when you rejoice. A golden chain.'—(Here he cast a look of perplexity.) 'I feel but cannot see,'—(here he began to suspect Alexander of insanity.) 'Binds earth to heaven,'—(of impiety, ditto.) 'It ties my heart *to* thee like a sunflower.' And now the reader wore the ill-used look of one who had been betrayed into a labyrinth of unmeaning syllables; but at this juncture, thanks to his sire, Alexander Oldworthy began to excite Mrs. Oldfield's interest.

'And that poetry is his!' said the actress.

'Poetry? no! How could my son write poetry? I'll be hanged if 'tisn't though, for all the lines begin with a capital letter.'

Oldfield took the paper from him. 'Listen,' said she, and with a heavenly cadence and expression, she spoke the lines thus:—

> "'My soul hangs trembling on that magic voice,
> Grieves with your woe, exults when you rejoice;
> A golden chain I feel, but cannot see,
> Binds earth to heaven—it ties my heart to thee,
> Like a sunflower," &c. &c.—

'What do you call that, eh?'

'Why, honey dropping from the comb,' said the astounded lawyer, to whom the art of speech was

entirely unknown, until that moment, as it is to millions of the human race.

'It is honey dropping from the comb,' repeated Nathan. 'I see, he has been and bought it ready-made, and it has cost him a pretty penny, no doubt. So, now his money's going to the dogs, too.'

'And these sentiments, these accents of poetry and truth, that have reached my heart, this daily homage, that would flatter a queen, do I owe it to your son? Oh! sir.'

'Good gracious Heavens!' roared the terrified father; 'don't *you* go and fall in love with *him;* and, now I think on't, that is what I have been working for ever since I came here. Cut it short. I came for my son and I will have him back, if you please. Where is he?'

'How can I know?' said the lady, pettishly.

'Why, he follows you everywhere.'

'Except here, where he never will follow me, unless his father teaches him housebreaking under the head of civil law.'

At this sudden thrust, Oldworthy blushed. 'Well, ma'am!' stammered he, 'I was a little precipitate; but, my good lady, pray tell me, when did you last see him?'

'I never saw him at all, which I regret,' added she, satirically; 'because you say he resembles his father.' Nathan was a particular ugly dog.

'She is very polite,' thought Nathan. 'But,'

objected he, 'you must have learned from his letters—'

'That they are not signed!' said she, handing the poetical epistle to him, with great significance.

Mr. Nathan Oldworthy began now to doubt whether he was *sur le bon terrain* in his present proceedings; and the error in which he had detected himself made him suddenly suspect his judgment and general report on another head. 'What an extraordinary thing!' said he, bluntly. 'Perhaps you are an honest woman after all, ma'am!'

'Sir!' said Oldfield, with a most tragic air.

'I ask your pardon, ma'am! I ask your pardon!' cried the other, terrified by the royal pronunciation of this monosyllable. 'Country manners, ma'am! that is all! We do speak so straightforward down in Coventry.'

'Yes! but if you speak so straightforward here, you will be sent to Coventry.'

'I'll take care not, madam! I'll take great care not!' said the other, hastily. Then he paused—a light rose gradually to his eye. 'Sent to Coventry! ha! haw! ho! But, madam, this love will be his ruin: it will rob him of his profession which he detests, and of a rich heiress whom he can't abide! Since I came here I think better of play-actors; but, consider, madam, we don't like our blood to come down in the world!'

'It *would* be cruel to lower an attorney,' replied the play-actress, looking him demurely in the face.

'You are considerate, madam!' replied he gratefully. He added with manly compunction, 'more so I fear than I have deserved.'

'Mais! il me désarme, cet homme!' cried the sprightly Oldfield, ready to scream with laughter.

'Are you speaking to me, ma'am?' said Nathan severely.

'No, that was an "aside." Go on, my good soul!'

'Then forgive the trouble, the agitation, of a father: his career, his happiness, is in danger.'

'Now, why did you not begin with that; it would have saved your time and mine. Favour me with your attention, sir, for a moment,' said the fine lady with grave courtesy.

'I will, madam,' said the other, respectfully.

'Mr. Oldworthy, first you are to observe, that I have by the constitution of these realms as much right to fall in love with your son, or even with yourself, as he or you have to do with me.'

'So you have: I never thought of that; but don't ye do it for Heaven's sake, if 'tisn't done already.'

'But I should have been inclined, even before your arrival, to waive that right out of regard for my own interest and reputation, especially the former: and now you have won my heart, and I enter into your feelings, and place myself at your service.'

'You are very good, madam! Now why do they go and run play-actors down so?'

'You are aware, sir, that we play-actors have not an

idea of our own in our sculls: our art is to execute beautifully the ideas of those who think: now, you are a man of business; you will therefore be pleased to give me your instructions, and you shall see those instructions executed better than they are down in Coventry. You want me to prevent your son from loving me. I consent. Tell me how to do it.'

'Madam!' said Nathan; 'you have put your finger on the very point. What a lawyer you would have made! Madam, I thank you! Very well, then you must—but, no, that will make him worse perhaps. And again, you can't leave off playing, *can* you? because that is your business you know—dear me. Ah! I'll tell you how to bring it about. Let me see —no!—yes!—no! drat it!'

'Your instructions are not sufficiently clear, sir!' suggested Mrs. Oldfield.

'Well madam! it is not so easy as I thought, and I don't see what instructions I am to give you, until—until—'

'Until I tell you what to tell me. That's fair. Well, give me a day to think. I am so busy now. I must play my best to-night!'

'But he'll be there,' said Nathan, in dismay: 'you'll play your best: you'll burn him to a cinder: I'll go to him. He ran to the window, informing his companion that, for the first time in his life, he was going to take a coach. But he had no sooner arrived at the window, than he made a sudden point, and

beckoned the lady to him, without removing his eyes from some object on which he glared down with a most singular expression of countenance. She came to his side. He directed her eyes to the object. 'Look there, ma'am! look there!' She peeped, and standing by a hosier's shop, at the corner of the street, she descried a young man engaged as follows:—His hat was in his hand, and on the hat was a little piece of paper. He was alternately writing on this, and looking upward for inspiration.

'Is that he?' whispered Mrs. Oldfield.

'Yes! that's your man—bare-headed, looking up into the sky, and doesn't see how it rains.'

'But he is very handsome, Mr. Oldworthy, and you said he was like—hem! yes, he is very handsome.'

'Isn't he, madam?'

He was handsome—his rich chestnut curls flowed down his neck in masses; his face was oval; his eyes full of colour and sentiment—and in him the purple light of youth was brightened by the electric light of expression and charming sensibility.

The strangely assorted pair in our scene held on by one another the better to inspect the young poet, who little thought what a pair of critics were in store for him.

'What a bright intelligent look the silly goose has!' said the actress.

'Hasn't he? the dear—idiot!' said the parent.

'Is he waiting for you, sir?' said she, with affected simplicity.

'No,' replied he with real, 'it's you he is waiting for.'

Alexander began to walk slowly past the house, looking up to heaven every now and then for inspiration, and then looking down and scribbling a bit, like a hen drinking, you know—and thus occupied, he stalked to and fro, passing and repassing beneath the criticising eyes—at sight of which pageant a father's fingers began to work, and, 'Madam,' said he, with a calmness too marked to be genuine, 'do let me fling one little—chair at his silly head.'

'No, indeed.'

'A pillow, then?'

'O Lud, no!—you don't know these boys, sir! he would take that as an overture of affection from the house. Stay, will you obey me, or will you not?'

'Of course I will!—how can I help?' and he grinned with horrible amiability.

'Then I will cure your son.'

'You will, you promise me?'

'On the honour of —— a play-acto r! and she offered him, with a world of grace, the loveliest hand going at that era.

'Of an angel, I think,' said the subjugated barbarian.

Mrs. Oldfield then gave him a short sketch of the idea that had occurred to her. 'Your son, sir,' said she, 'is in love by the road of imagination and taste—he has seen upon the stage a being more like a poet's

dream than any young woman down in Coventry—and he over-rates her; I will contrive that in ten minutes he shall under-rate her. I will also find means to wound his vanity, which is inordinate in all his sex, and gigantic in the versifying part of it—and then, sir, I promise that your son's love, so fresh, so fiery, so lofty, so humble, will either turn to hatred or contempt, or else quietly evaporate like a mist, and vanish like a morning dream. Ah!'—(and she could not help sighing a little.)

Susan was then called, and directed to show Mr. Nathan Oldworthy out the back way, that he might avoid the encounter of his son. The said Nathan, accordingly marched slap away in four great strides; but the next moment the door burst open, and he returned in four more—he took up a position opposite his fair entertainer, and, with much gravity, executed a solemn, but marvellously grotesque bow, intended to express gratitude and civility; this done, he recovered body, and strode away again slap dash.

Spirits like Alexander's are greatly depressed and greatly elevated without proportionate change in the external causes of joy and grief. It is theirs to view the same set of facts rose-colour one day, lurid another. Two days ago Alexander had been in despondence, to-day hope was in the ascendant, and his destiny appeared to him all bathed in sunshine. He was rich in indistinct but gay hopes; these hopes

had whispered to him, that, after all, an alliance between a dramatic poet and a tragedian was a natural one—that, perhaps, on reflection, she he loved might not think it so very imprudent. He felt convinced she had read 'Berenice'—she would see the alterations in the heroine's part, and that love had dictated them. She would find there was one being that comprehended her. That, and his verses, would surely plead his cause. Then he loved her so—who could love her as he did? Some day she would feel that no heart could love her so—and then he would say to her 'I am truth and nature; you are beauty and music—united, we should conquer the world, and be the world to one another!' Poor boy!

He was walking and dreaming thus beneath her window, when his ear caught the sound of that window opening; he instantly cowered against the wall, hoping this happy day to see the form he loved, himself unseen, when, to his immeasurable surprise, a beautiful girl put her head out of the window, and called softly to him. He took no notice, because it was inaudible. She had to repeat the call before he could realise his good fortune; the signal, however, was unmistakeable, and soon after the door opened, and there was pretty Susan blushing. Alexander ran to her; she opened the door wider, he entered, believing in magic for the first time. Susan took him up stairs—he said nothing—he could not—she did not speak, because she thought he ought to. At last they reached a richly-

furnished room, where Statira's dress lay upon a chair, and a theatrical diadem upon a table. Alexander's heart leaped at sight of these; he knew then where he was; he turned hot and cold, and trembled violently. The first word Susan said did not calm his agitation. 'There is a lady here,' said she, 'who has something to say to you.'

Now, it must be remembered, that Susan considered Alexander her undoubted property, and when she was told to introduce him she could not help thinking how kind it was of her cousin to take her part, and bring to the point a young gentleman, who, charming in other respects, was sadly deficient in audacity. 'Sit down,' said Susan, smiling.

Oh! no! he could not sit down here! Susan pitied his timidity and his discomposure, and to put both him and herself out of pain the sooner, she left him and went to announce his presence to her cousin and guardian as she now considered her.

Alexander was left alone to all appearance; in reality he was in a crowd—a crowd of 'thick-coming fancies.' He was to breathe the same air as her, to be by her side, whom the world adored at a distance; he was to see her burst on him like the sun, and to feel more strongly than ever how far his verse fell short of the goddess who inspired it; he half wished to retreat from his too great happiness. Suddenly a rustle in the apartment awakened him from his rich reverie; he looked up, and there was a lady with her eyes fixed on him.

The lady had on what might, without politeness, but with truth, be called a dressing gown; it was ostentatiously large everywhere, especially at the waist. The lady's hair, or what seemed her hair, was rough, and ill done up, and a great cap of flaunty design surmounted her head. On her feet were old slippers.

'Good day, sir!' said she, drily.

Alexander bowed. 'Madam! I await Mrs. Oldfield.'

'*Tête-à-tête* with you muse.' Alexander's poetical works were in her hand.

'She is my muse, madam!' replied he; 'she alone. Are you not proud of her, madam? for I see by your likeness that you are some relation.'

The lady burst out laughing: 'That's a compliment to my theatrical talent; I am the party.'

'You Mrs. Oldfield! the great Mrs. Oldfield!'

'Why not? What, you come from the country, I suppose, and think we are to be always on stilts, when we are not paid for it. You look as if you were afraid of me.'

'Oh, no! madam; and, as you say, it shows how great your talent is.'

'You want to speak to me, my lad.'

Alexander blushed to the temples. 'Yes, madam!' faltered he, 'you have divined my ambition. I have been presumptuous—but I saw you on the tragic scene—the admiration you inspired—I fear I have importuned you—but my hope, my irresistible desire——.'

'There, I know what you mean,' said she with an affectation of vulgar good nature, 'you want an order for the pit?'

'I want an order for the pit?' gasped Alexander, faintly.

'Well, ain't I going to give you one,' answered she, as sharp as a needle; 'but mind, you must—' here she imitated vehement applause.

'Oh! madam! I need no such injunction,' cried Alexander, 'each of your achievements on the stage seems to me greater than the last.' Then, trembling, blushing, and eloquent as fire, he poured out his admiration of her, and her great art: 'The others are all puppets, played by rule around you the queen of speech and poetry; your pathos is so true, your sensibility so profound; yours are real tears; you lead our sorrow in person; you fuse your soul into those great characters, and art becomes nature: you are the thing you seem, and it is plain each lofty emotion passes through that princely heart on its way to those golden lips.'

Oldfield, with all her self-command, could not quite resist the eloquence of the heart and brain. She, too, now blushed a little, and her lovely bosom heaved slowly, but high, as the poet poured the music of his praise into her ears: then she stole a look at him, from under her long lashes, and sipped his beauty and his freshness. She could not help looking at this forbidden fruit. As she looked, she did feel how hard, how

cruel it was, that she was not to be allowed to play with this young, fresh heart; to see it throb with hopes and fears, and love, jealousy, anguish, joy, and finally to break it, and fling the pieces to the devil; but she was a singular character—she was the concentrated essence of female in all points, except one: she was a woman of her word, or, as some brutes would say, no woman at all in matters of good faith. She stood pledged to the attorney, and therefore, recovering herself, she took up Alexander thus:—

'No, thank you: emotions pass through my, what's the name—well, you *are* green—you don't come from the country—you are from Wales. I must enlighten you; sit down: sit down, I tell you. The tears, my boy, are as real as the rest—as the sky, and that's pasteboard—as the sun, and he is three candless mirking upon all nature, which is canvas—they are as real as ourselves, the tragedy queens, with our cries, our sighs, and our sobs, all measured out to us by the five-foot rule. Reality, young gentleman, *that* begins when the curtain falls, and we wipe off our profound sensibility along with our rouge, our whiting, and our beauty spots.'

'Impossible!' cried the poet, 'those tears, those dew-drops on the tree of poetry!'

He was requested not to make her 'die of laughing' with his tears; his common sense was appealed to. 'Now, my good soul, if I was to vex myself night after night for Clytemnestra and Co., don't you see that I

should not hold together long? No thank you! I've got "Nance Oldfield" to take care of, and what's Hecuba to her? For my part,' continued this frank lady, 'I don't understand half the authors give us to say.'

'Oh, yes, you do! you write upon our eyes and ears more than half of all the author gains credit for—the noblest sentiments gain more from your tongue than the pen, great as it is, could ever fling upon paper—I am unworthy to be your companion!'

'Nonsense! do you really think I am like those black parrots of tragedy?—fine company I should be! —he, he!—No! we are like other women, you can court us without getting a dagger stuck into you.' She then informed him that the representatives of Desdemona, Belvidera, Cordelia, and Virgin Purity in general, had all as many beaus as they could lay their hands on—that she had twenty at the present moment; that he could join that small, but select band, if he chose, secure of this, that whether a fortunate or unfortunate lover, there would be companions of his fate — then suddenly interrupting her disclosures, she offered him a snuff-box, and said, drily, 'D'ye snuff?'

Alexander's eye dilated with horror. She observed him, and explained, 'There's no doing without it, in our business: we get so tired!' here she yawned as only actresses yawn,—like one going out of the world in four pieces: 'We get so tired of the whole concern. This is the real source of our inspiration,' said she,

taking a pinch, 'or how should we ever rise to the Poet's level, and launch all those awful execrations they love so? as, for instance—Ackishoo!—God bless you!'

Alexander groaned aloud.

'Poor boy!' thought his tormentor, 'how he takes it to heart.'

'Why, ma'am, a fall from heaven to earth is a considerable descent.'

'You look pale, my child,' resumed the tormentor. 'No breakfast, perhaps. I'd offer you some in a minute, but the fact is I look to every penny; when the rainy day comes I shall be ready,' and she brought both hands down upon her knees, in a way the imitated vulgarity of which would have made any one scream with laughter that had seen her game; but it was all genuine to our poor poet, and crushed him.

Having opened this vain of self-depreciation, she proceeded to work it. She poked him with one finger, and looking slily with half-shut eye at him, she announced herself the authoress of some very curious calculations, the object of which was to discover by comparing the week's salary with the lines in the night's performance the exact value of poetical passages generally supposed to be invaluable. 'Listen,' said she,—

'"Come! come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here!

They are worth just tenpence?

Alexander, who had been raised by the poëtry, was depressed by its arithmetic.

She recommenced—

> '"That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry hold! hold!—Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!"'

Making the point on 'Great Glamis,' at Macbeth's entrance, not on 'hold,' which is done now-a-days, and is too cruel silly.

'Ah!' you are yourself again,' cried the poet.

'Yes; I am myself again!' was the dry answer: 'those bring me in 2*s.* 8*d.* every time.'

And this was the being he had adored! He had invested this creature with his own prismatic hues, and taken her for a rainbow.

Mrs. Oldfield told afterwards that she felt herself cutting his heart away from her at every sentence. 'But it was to be done. She continued 'So now you know my trade, tell me, what is yours?'

'One I used to despise—an advocate.'

'Ah! a little long robe; they are actors too, only bad ones; but tell me,' said she, with a silly coquettish manner, borrowed from the comedy of the day, 'what do you want of me? You have not followed me so perseveringly for nothing! Speak, what have you to tell me?'

Alexander blushed: he had no longer the stimulus to tell her all he had felt and hoped; he hesitated and

stammered: at last he bethought him of his tragedy; so he said, 'I sent you a tragedy, madam!'

'What! do they do that in Warwickshire?'

'Yes, madam! I composed it by stealth in my father's office.'

Oldfield smiled.

Alexander continued,—'It is called, from the heroine of the play, Berenice!'

'Berenice!' cried the actress, with a start.

Now this tragedy had pleased Mrs. Oldfield more than any manuscript she had seen these three years; but, above all, the part of 'Berenice' had charmed her: it fitted her like a glove, as she poetically expressed herself; it was written in Alexander's copper-plate hand, so she had not identified it with the author of her diurnal verses.

'Berenice! is it possible?'

'A queen, madam, who, captured by the Romans—.'

'What, sir! you the author of that work?' said she with sudden respect.

'Favour me with your opinion,' said the sanguine poet.

Tremble, Nathan! You had only her womanly weakness to dread hitherto; but now the jade's interest is against you. Strange to say, her promise carried the day: she was true as steel to Nathan, and remorseless as steel to Alexander. She saw at once that no middle course was now tenable; so she turned on the poor poet, not without secret regret, and with a voice of ice

she said, 'The town is tired of Romans, my good sir: you had better go into Tartary. Besides,' added she, jumping at the common-places of dramatic censure, 'your fable does not march, your language wants fire: let me give you a word of advice, or rather a line of advice, "Plead, Alexander, plead, and rhyme no more!" She then added hastily, in a very different tone and manner, 'Forgive me, my poor child; you will make more money, and be more respected.'

The reason of this rapid change of manner was this —when we have given dreadful pain, more pain than we calculated on, and see it, we are apt to try and qualify it with a little weak empty good-nature. Now at her verdict and her witty line, Alexander had turned literally as pale as ashes! The drop of oil she poured on the deadly wounds she had given was no comfort to him; he rose, he tried to speak to her, but his lip trembled so violently, he could not articulate; at last he gasped out, 'Thank you for undeceiving me —you have taught me your own v—value; and m—mine. Forgive me the time I have made you waste, upon a d—dunce.' And then, in spite of all he could do, the tears forced themselves through the poor boy's eyes; and casting one look of shame and half reproach upon her, he put his hand to his brow, and went disconsolately from the room and out of the house.

Poor fellow! she had made him ten years older, than when ten minutes before he entered that room, all faith, and poetry, and love.

Slowly and disconsolately he dragged his heavy steps and heavy heart home. His father followed and entered his small apartment without ceremony. Nathan found his son sitting with his eyes fixed on the ground. In a few abrupt words he told him he knew all about his amorous folly, and had come up to cure it.

'It is cured,' said Alexander; 'she has cured me herself.'

'Then she is an honest woman,' cried Nathan. 'So now, since that nonsense is over, take my arm and we will go down to Westminster.'

'Yes, father.'

They went to Westminster; they entered a court of law, and were so fortunate as to hear an interesting trial. Counsel for the plaintiff was just opening a crim. con. case.

The advocate dwelt upon the sacred feelings outraged by the seducer, on the irremediable gap that had been made in a house, and in a human heart; the pitiable doubt that had been cast over those sacred parental affections which were all that now remained to the bereaved husband. He painted the empty chamber, the vacant place by the hearth, and the father dagger-struck by little voices lisping, 'Papa, where is mama gone?' and all that sort of thing. His speech was rich in topic and point, and as for emphasis, it was all emphasis. He concluded in this wise, 'Such injuries as these can never be compensated by money; it is ridiculous to talk of money where a man has been laid

desolate, and, therefore I hope, gentlemen of the jury, you will give my unfortunate client three thousand pounds damages at the very least!'

At each point the orator made, Nathan nudged Alexander, as if to say, 'That is how you must do it some day.'

As they returned homewards Attorney asked Poet how he had been charmed by Mr. Eitherside's eloquence.

'Eloquence,' said Alexander, waking from his reverie. 'I heard no eloquence.'

'No eloquence! why he worked the defendant like a man beating a carpet.'

Nathan recapitulated Mr. Eitherside's points.

'Well, father,' was the languid reply, 'this shows me that people who would speak about the heart, should speak from the heart. I heard something like a terrier dog barking, that is all I remember.'

'A terrier dog! one of the first counsel in the land; but there, you come to your dinner. I won't be in a passion with you, if I can help, because—you'll be better after dinner.'

Nathan's satisfaction at his son's sudden cure was soon damped. Alexander was not better after dinner; to be sure this might have been owing to his having eaten none; he could not eat, and never volunteered a word; only when spoken to three times, he shook himself and answered with a visible effort, and then nestled into silence again. The next and following days

matters were worse. Spite of all Nathan could do to move him, he sank into a cold listless melancholy. About five o'clock (play-time) he used to be very restless and nervous for a little while, and then relapse into stone. And now Nathan began to ask himself what the actress had done to his son during that short interview between them. He began greatly to doubt the wonderful cure, or rather to fear that the first poison had been attacked by a stronger in the way of antidote, which had left his son in worse case than before.

Hitherto he had thought it wisest to avoid the subject, and silently expel the boy's folly by taking him and shaking him, and keeping him from thinking of it. But now one evening as he looked at Alexander's pallid, listless countenance, this anxiety got the better of his plan, and he could not help facing the obnoxious topic.

After a vain attempt or two to interest the poet in other matters, he suddenly burst out, 'What is the matter, Alexander? What has she done to you now?'

Alexander winced.

'Tell me, my boy,' said Nathan, more gently.

Alexander *éclata.*

'She has deceived me. She has robbed my heart of all its wealth. Oh! I would rather have gone on believing her all that is great and good, though inaccessible to me. But to find my divinity a mean heart-

less slattern. To have poured all my treasures away for ever upon an unworthy object. Oh, father, I do not grieve so much that she is worthless, but that I thought her worthy. To me she was the jewel of the earth.—I know her now for a vile counterfeit, and I have wasted my affections on this creature, and now I have none left for any worthy object; scarcely for my father. See my conduct to you all this week. Heaven forgive me—and you forgive me, sir. I feel I am no son to you. I am lost! I am lost!'

'Alexander, don't be a fool,' roared Nathan, 'get up off your knees, or I'll kee—kee—kick you into the fi—fire!' gulped he; 'that is right—that's a dear boy: now tell me what has the poor lady done? I can't think she is such a very bad one.'

'She has robbed herself and me of the tints with which I had invested her, and shown herself to me in her true colours.'

'Why you mustn't tell me she paints her face, without 'tis with cold water.'

'Oh, no! not that, but off the stage she is a mean, vulgar, bad woman.'

'I can't think that of her, Alexander.'

'Father, I have no words to tell you her vulgarity, her avarice, her stupidity—as for her beauty, it is all paint and artifice: father, I saw her this day se'nnight in her own house; she is vulgar, and dirty, and almost ugly.'

'Oh, you deceitful young rascal, you know she is beautiful as an angel!'

'Isn't she, sir!—ah! you have only seen her on the stage.'

'I see her on the stage! What, do you tell me I go to the play-house! I never was in a play-house in my life.'

'Then how do you know she is beautiful? Where have you seen her, if not on the stage?'

Mr. Oldworthy senior hesitated. He did not choose his son to know he had visited the play-actress, and enlisted her in his cause.

Alexander saw his hesitation, and misinterpreted it ludicrously.

'Ah, father,' cried he, 'do not be ashamed of it.'

'I am not—ashamed of what?'

'Would I were worthy of all this affection!'

'What affection?'

'That you have for the unfortunate.'

'I have no affection for the unfortunate, it's always their own fault.'

'If you know how I honour you for this you would not deny or be ashamed of it.'

'Of what? Are we talking riddles?'

'Do not attempt to disguise what gives you a fresh title to my gratitude—it was curiosity to see my destroyer drew you thither. Ah, it must have been the day before yesterday. I remember you disappeared after dinner. Well, father,' continued Alexander, with

a sad sweet melancholy accent, 'you saw her play "Monimia" that night, and having seen her, you can forgive my infatuation.'

'No! I can't forgive your infatuation, obstinate toad! that will tell me I have been to the play-house—to the devil's own shop parlour that is.'

'You have seen her—you call her beautiful: therefore it is clear you have seen her at the theatre, for at home she is anything but beautiful, or an angel.'

'Alexander, you will put me in a passion; but I won't be put in a passion.' So saying, the old gentleman, who was in a passion, marched slap out of the house into the moonlight and cooled himself therein.

On his return he found his son sitting in a sort of collapse by the fire, and all his endeavours to draw him from brooding over his own misery proved unavailing. The next day he was worse, if possible; and when play-time had come and gone, and Nathan was in the middle of a long law-case that he was relating for his son's amusement, Alexander, who had not spoken for hours, quietly asked Nathan what he thought about suicide, and whether it was injudicious to die when hope was dead and life withered for ever. Nathan gave a short severe answer to this query; but it troubled him.

He began to be frightened: he consulted Bateman. Bateman was equally puzzled; but at last the latter hit upon an idea. 'Go to the actress again,' said he; 'it seems she can do anything with him. She made him

love her—she made him hate her; ask her to make him to do something between the two.'

'Why, you old fool!' was the civil retort, 'you are as mad as he is. No! she almost bewitched me, for as old as I am; and I won't go near her again.'

But Alexander got worse and worse. He drooped like a tender flower. He had lost appetite and sleep; and without them the body soon gives way.

His grief was of the imagination. But the distinction muddle-heads draw between real and imaginary griefs is imaginary. Whatever robs a human unit of rest, nourishment, and life, is as real to him as anything but eternity is real.

The old men saw a subtle disorder creeping over the young man. It was incomprehensible to them; and after ridiculing it awhile, they began to be more frightened at it than if they had comprehended it.

At last, one morning, a new phase presented itself. A great desire for solitude consumed our poor poet. All human beings were distasteful to him, and, his mind being in a diseased state, Nathan and Timothy bored him like red-hot gimlets—the truth must be told. Well, this particular morning they would not let him alone—and he so wanted just to be left in peace—and partly from nervousness, partly from irritation, partly from misery, the poet lost all self-command, and, I am sorry to say, cursed and swore and vowed he would kill himself; and called his friends his tormentors, and wept and raved and cursed the hour he was born.

And at the end of this most unbecoming tirade he was for dashing out of the house, but his father caught him by the collar and whirled him back into his room, and locked him into it. Alexander fell into a chair and buried his face in his hands: presently he heard something that made him feel how selfish his grief had been. He heard a deep sigh just outside the door, and then a heavy step went down the stair.

'Father!' cried he, 'forgive me! Oh, forgive me!'

It was too late. All who give a parent pain repent; but how often it is too late.

The poor old man was gone, as unhappy as his son, and with more solid reason. He went into the street without knowing what he should do or where he should go.

It happened at this moment that Bateman's advice came into his head. He was less disposed to scout it now.

'It can do no harm,' thought he, 'and I am quite at a loss. She has a good heart, I think, and at all events she seems to know how to work on him, and I don't. I'll risk it.'

So, hanging his head, and with no very good will, he slowly wended his way towards Mrs. Oldfield's house.

When Alexander left Mrs. Oldfield, that lady took off her vulgar cap and the old wig with which she had disguised her lovely head, and, throwing herself into a

chair, laughed at the piece of comedy she had played off on our poor poet.

Her laugh, however, was not sincere; it soon died away into something more like a sigh.

The next morning there was no letter in verse, and she missed it. She had become used to them, and was vexed to think she had put an end to them. On returning from the theatre she looked from her carriage to see if he was standing as usual by the stage-door. No, he was not there; no more letters—no more Alexander. She felt sorry she had lost so genuine an admirer; and the moment the sense of his loss touched herself she began to pity him, and think what a shame it was to deceive him so.

'I could have liked him better than all the rest,' said she.

But this lady's profession is one unfavourable to the growth of regrets, or of affection for any object not in sight. She had to rehearse from ten till one, then to come home, then to lay out her clothes for the theatre, then to dine, then to study, then to go to the theatre, then to dress, then to act with all the intoxications of genius, light, multitude, and applause; then to undress, sup, &c., and all this time she was constantly flattered and courted by dozens of beaus and wits. Had she been capable of a deep attachment, it could not have monopolised her as Alexander's did his. However she did thus much for our poor poet; when she found she had succeeded in banishing him she went into her tan-

trums, and snapped at and scratched everybody else that was kind to her. She also often invited Susan to speak of him, and after awhile snubbed her and forbade the topic.

To-day, then, as Mrs. Oldfield sat studying 'The Rival Queens,' suddenly she heard a sob, and there was Susan, with the tears quietly and without effort streaming from her eyes, like the water running through a lock gate. Susan had just returned from a walk.

'What have you done?' whined Susan. 'I have just met him, and he said to me, "Ah, madam!" he always calls me madam, and he has lost his beautiful colour—he is miserable—and I am miserable.'

'Well!' snapped Anne, 'and am I not miserable too! why, Susan,' cried she, for a glimmering of light burst on her, 'surely you are not such a goose as to fancy yourself in love with my Alexander.'

My Alexander—good! She has declined him for herself, but she will not let you have him any the more for *that*—other women!

'Your Alexander! No! I am too fond of my own! here's your one's book,' and Susan thrust a duodecimo towards her cousin.

'My one's book,' said Mrs. Oldfield, with a mystified air.

'Yes! Robert says it belongs to the young gentleman who saved you from the Duchess's carriage; he picked it up after the battle.'

Mrs. Oldfield opened the book with interest; judge

her surprise when the first page discovered verses in Alexander's well-known hand: in the next page was a spirited drawing of Mrs. Oldfield as 'Sophonisba;' under it was written, in gold letters, 'Not one base word of Carthage on thy soul,' a line the actress used to speak with such majesty and fire that the audience always burst into a round of applause. And so on, upon every page poetry or picture. The verses were more tender than those he had sent her by letter. The book was his secret heart!

It was Alexander, then, who had saved her—his love surrounded her. And how had all his devotion been repaid? She became restless—bit her lips; the book she held became a book in a mist, and she said to Susan, in bitter accents, 'They had better not let the poor boy come near me again, or they will find I am a woman, in spite of my nasty blank verse and bombast Oh! oh! oh!' and the tragedian whimpered a little, much as a housemaid whimpers; it was not at all like the 'real tears' that had so affected Alexander.

On the fly-leaf of this little book was written:—'Alexander Oldworthy! Should I die—and I think I shall not live, for my love consumes me—I pray some good Christian to take this book to the great Mrs. Oldfield; it will tell her what I shall never dare to tell her: and if departed spirits are permitted to watch those they have loved, it is for her sake I shall revisit this earth, which, but for her, I should leave without regret.'

'I am a miserable woman!' cried the dealer in fictitious grief. '*This is love!* I never was loved before, and mine must be the hand to stab him; they make me turn his goddess to a slut—his love to contempt; and I do it, mad woman that I am! for what? to rob myself of the solace Heaven had sent to my vacant heart—of the only real treasure the earth contains;' and she burst into a passion of tears.

At this, Susan's dried themselves; the grief of the greater mind swallowed up her puny sorrow, as the river absorbs the brook that joins it. Anne frightened her, and at last she stole from the room in dismay. Her absence, however, was short; she returned in about ten minutes, and announced a visitor.

'I will not see him!' said Mrs. Oldfield, almost fiercely, looking off the part she had begun to study.

'It is the rough gentleman!' said Susan.

'What! Alexander's father? Admit him. He is come to thank me; and well he may. Cruel wretches that we both are.'

Nathan entered, but with a face so rueful, that Mrs. Oldfield saw at once gratitude had not brought him there.

'What have you done, madam?' was his first word.

'Kept my word to you like a fool,' was the answer; 'I hope you are come to reproach me—it would not be complete without that!'

Nathan had come with that intention, but he was

now terror-struck, and afraid to do anything of the kind. He proceeded however in mournful tones to tell her that Alexander had fallen into a state of despondency and desperation, which had made him—the father—regret that more innocent madness he had hitherto been so anxious to cure.

'He says he will kill himself,' said Nathan. 'And if he does, he will kill me: poor boy! all his illusions are kicked head over heels; so he says, however.'

'A good job, too!' said Mrs. Oldfield.

'How can you say a good job, when it will be a job for Bedlam.'

'Bedlam!'

'Yes; he is mad!'

'What makes you think he is mad?'

'He says you are not beautiful! "She has neither heart, grace, nor wit," says he: in a word, he is insane. I reasoned calmly with him,' continued the afflicted father, 'I told him he was an idiot. But I am sorry to say, he answered my affectionate remonstrance with nonsense and curses, and a lot of words without head or tail to them: he is mad!'

'You cruel old man!' cried Mrs. Oldfield: 'have you done nothing to soothe the poor child?'

'Oh! yes!' said the cruel old man, resenting the doubt cast upon his tenderness; 'I shoved him into a room, and double-locked him in; and came straight to you for advice about him, you are so clever.'

'So it seems!' said she; 'I have made everybody

unhappy—you, Alexander, and, most of all, myself.' And tears began to well out of her lovely eyes.

'Oh, dear!—oh, dear!—oh, dear!—don't you vex yourself so, my lamb.'

But the lamb, *alias* crocodile, insisted upon putting her head gracefully upon Nathan's shoulder, and crying meekly awhile. On this (a man's heart being merely a lump of sugar that melts when woman's eye lets fall a drop of warm water upon it) Nathan loved her: it was intended he should.

'I would give my right arm, if you would make him love you again; at all events a little—a very little indeed. Poor Alexander, he is a fool, a scatter-brain; and, for aught I know, a versifier, but he is my son. I have but him. If he goes mad or dies, his father will lie down and die too.'

'Sir!' said the actress, with sudden cheerfulness, and drying her tears with suspicious rapidity: 'bring him to me; and,' (patting him slily on the arm,) 'you shall see me make him love me more than ever—ten times more, if you approve, dear sir!'

'Here! he won't come: he rails at you, you are his aversion. Oh, he is mad! my son is deprived of reason: this comes of those cursed rhymes.'

A pause ensued: Oldfield broke it. 'I have it!' cried she; 'he is an author: they are all alike!' (What did she mean by that?) 'Speak to him of "Berenice."'

'Whom am I to talk to him about?'

'Berenice!'

'What, is he after another woman now?'

'No—his tragedy!'

'His tragedy!'

'Ah! I forgot,' said she coolly: 'you are not in the secret; he composed it by stealth in your office.' She then seated herself at a side-table, and wrote a note with theatrical rapidity.

'Give him this,' said she. Receiving no answer, she looked up a little surprised, and there was Nathan apoplectic with indignation; his two cheeks, red as beetroot, were puffed out; paternal tenderness was in abeyance; finally he exploded in, 'So, this was how my brief-paper went;' and marched off impetuously, throwing down a chair.

'Where are you going?' remonstrated his companion.

'He is an author,' was the reply; 'he is no son of mine. I'll unlock him and kick him into the wide world.'

'What, for consecrating your brief-paper to the Muse?'

'Yes; did you ever know a decent, respectable character write poetry?'

'Yes!'

'No; that you never did! Who, now?'

'David! he wrote Hebrew poetry—the "Psalms;" and very beautiful poetry too.'

Poor Nathan! he was like a bull, which in the middle of a gallant charge, receives a bullet in a vital

part, and so pulls up, and looks mighty stupid for a moment ere he falls.

But Nathan did not fall; he glared reproach on Mrs. Oldfield for having said a thing, which, though it did not exactly admit of immediate confutation, was absurd as well as profane thought he, and resolved to serve Alexander out for it: he told her as much. So, then ensued a little piece of private theatricals. Mrs. Oldfield, clasping her hands together, began to go gracefully down on her knees an inch at a time (nothing but great practice enabled her to do it), and remind Nathan that he was a father—that his son's life was more precious than anything—that to be angry with the unhappy was cruel,—'Save him! save him!'

Poor Nathan took all this stage business for an unpremeditated effusion of the heart, and with a tear in his eye, raised the queen of crocodiles, and with a hideously amiable grin, 'I'll forgive him!' said he; 'to please you I'd forgive Old Nick.'

With this virtuous resolve, and equivocal compliment, he vanished from the presence chamber, and hurried towards Alexander's retreat.

Oldfield retired hastily to her bedroom, and having found 'Berenice,' ran hastily through it once more, and began to study a certain scene which she thought could be turned to her purpose. Having what is called a very quick study, she was soon mistress of the twenty or thirty lines. She then put on a splendid dress,

appropriate (according to the ideas of the day) to an Eastern queen. That done, she gave herself to Statira, the part she was to play upon this important evening; but Susan observed a strange restlessness and emotion in her cousin.

'What is the matter, Anne?' said she.

'It is too bad of these men,' was the answer. 'I ought to be all Statira to-day, and, instead of a tragedy-queen they make me feel—like a human being! This will not do; I cannot have my fictitious feelings, in which thousands are interested, endangered for such a trifle as my real ones;' and, by a stern effort, she glued her eyes to her part, and was Statira.

Meantime Nathan had returned to Alexander, and giving him Mrs. Oldfield's note, bade him instantly accompany him to her house.

Alexander had no sooner read the note, than the colour rushed into his pale face, and his eye brightened; but, on reflection, he begged to be excused from going there. But his father, who had observed the above symptoms, which proved to him the power of this benevolent enchantress, would take no denial; so they returned together to her house. It was all very well the first part of the road, but, at sight of the house, poor Alexander was seized with a combination of feelings, that made it impossible for him to proceed.

'I feel faint, father.'

'Lean on me.'

'Pray excuse me—I will go back to Coventry with you—to the world's end—but don't take me to that house.'

'Come along, ye soft-hearted milk-sop.'

'Well, then, you must assist me, for my limbs fail me at the idea.'

'Mine shall help you,'—and he put an arm under his son's shoulder, and hoisted him along in an undeniable manner—and so, in a few minutes more the attorney was to be seen half drawing, half dragging the poet into the abode of the Syren, which he had first entered breathing fire and fury against play-actors to drag his son out of. It was, indeed, a curious reversal of sentiments in a brace of bosoms.

'No, father! no!'—sighed Alexander, as his father pulled him into her salon.

'But I tell you it is for your tragedy,' remonstrated the parchment to the paper hero. 'It's business,' said he reproachfully, 'Now 'tis writ, let us sell it—to greater fools than ourselves,—if we can find them.' The tone in which he uttered the last sentence conveyed no very sanguine hope on his part of a purchaser.

'Why did you bring me here, dear father?' sighed the *desillusioné*. 'It was here my idol descended from her pedestal. Oh, reality! you are not worth the pain of living—the toil of breathing.'

'Poor boy!' thought Nathan—'he is in a bad way—the toil of breathing—well, I never!—your tragedy,

lad—your tragedy,' insinuated he, biting his lips not to be in a rage.

'Ah!' said Alexander, perking up, 'it is the last tie that holds me to life—she says in this note that she took it for another, and that mine has merit.'

'No doubt! no doubt!' said the other, humouring the absurdity—'how came the Muse (that is the wench's name, I believe) into my office?'

'She used ever to come in,' began he in rapt tones, 'when you went out,' he added, mighty drily.

Alexander's next casual observation was to this effect—that once he had a soul, but that now his lyre was broken.

'That's soon mended,' said his rough comforter; 'well, since your *liar* is cracked'

'I said broken, father—it is broken, and for me the business of life is ended.'

'Well,' said the parent, whose *good*-humour at this crisis appears to have been inexhaustible, 'since your liar is broken—smashed, I hope—and your business done, or near it, turn to amusement a bit my poor lad.'

Alexander looked at him, surveyed him from top to toe.

'Amusement!' winnied the inconsolable one, with a ghastly chuckle—'amusement. Where can broken hearts find amusement?'

'IN THE LAW!' roared Nathan, with cheerful, hopeful, healthy tone and look. 'I do,' said he;

then, seeing bitter incredulity on the poet, he explained, *sotto voce*, 'tisn't as if we were clients, ye fool.'

'Never,' shrieked Alexander.

Poor Nathan had commanded his wrath till now, but this energetic 'Never,' set him in a blaze.

'Never, you young scamp,' shouted he, 'but—but—don't put me in a passion—when I tell ye the excise-man's daughter won't have you on any other terms.'

'And I won't have her, on any terms—she is a woman.'

'Well, she is on the road to it—she is a girl, and a very fine one, and you are to make her a woman—and she will make a man of you, I hope.'

'No more women for me,' objected the poet. He then confided to an impatient parent his future plan of existence—it was simple, very simple; he purposed to live in a garret in London, hating and hated; so this brought matters to a head.

'I have been too good to you! you are mad! and, by virtue of parental authority I seize your body, young man.'

But the body had legs, and, for once, an attorney failed to effect a seizure.

He slipped under his father's arm, and getting a table between them, gave vent to his despair.

'Since you are without pity,' cried he, 'I am lost—farewell for ever!' and he rushed to the door which opened at that instant.

The father uttered a deprecatory cry, which died off

into a semi-quaver of admiration—for, at this moment, a lady of dazzling beauty, arrayed in a glorious robe that swept the ground, crossed the poet's path, before he could reach the door, and, with a calm, but queen-like gesture, rooted him to the spot.

She uttered but one word, but that word, as she spoke it, seemed capable of stilling the waves of the sea.

'Hold!'

No louder than you and I speak, reader, but irresistibly. Such majesty and composure came from her, upon them, with this simple monosyllable. They stood spell-bound. Alexander thought no more of flight; nor Nathan of pursuit.

At last, by one of those inspirations, that convey truth more surely than human calculation is apt to, the poet cried out, 'This is herself, the other was a personation!'

'Berenice' took no notice of this exclamation. She continued, with calm majesty,—

> '"listen to a queen, whose steadfast will
> In chains is royal, in Rome unconquer'd still;
> O'er my bowed head though waves of sorrow roll,
> I still retain the empire of my soul."'

Her two hearers stood spell-bound. And then did Alexander taste the greatest pleasure earth affords—to be a poet, and to love a great actress, and to hear the magic lips he loved speak his own verse. Love, taste, and vanity were all gratified at once. With what rich flesh and blood she clothed his shadowy creation; the

darling of his brain was little more than a skeleton; it was reserved for the darling of his heart to complete the creation. And then his words, oh! what a majesty and glory they took from her heavenly tongue. They were words no more—they were thunderbolts of speech, and sparks of audible soul. He wondered at himself and them.

Oldfield spoke his line,

'O'er my bowed head though waves of sorrow roll,'

with a grand, though plaintive swell, like the sea itself —it was really wonderful.

Alexander had no conception he or any man had ever written so grand a line as 'O'er my bowed head though waves of sorrow roll.' He was in heaven. A moment like this is beyond the lot of earth, and compensates the smart that is apt to be in store, all in good time, for the poet that loves a great actress, that is to say, a creature with the tongue of an angel, the principles of a weasel, and the passions of a fish!

'And have those lips graced words of mine?' gasped Alexander. 'My verses, father!'

'His verses! no!' said Nathan, addressing the actress; 'can he write like the sound of a trumpet?'

'Yes! Alexander, I like your play, particularly a scene, where this poor queen sacrifices her love to the barbarous prejudices of her captors.'

'My favourite scene! my favourite scene! Father, she likes my favourite scene!'

'Gentlemen, be so good as to lend yourselves to the situation a moment—here, Susan!' In came Susan, her eyes very red; she had been employed realizing that Alexander was not to be hers.

'You, sir!' continued Mrs. Oldfield, addressing Nathan, 'are the Consul—the inexorable Father.'

'Oh! am I?'

'Yes! you must stand there—on that flower—like a marble pillar—deaf to all my entreaties. You are about to curse your son.'

'I curse my boy? Never!'

'Father, for Heaven's sake, do what she bids you.'

'Dress the scene,' continued she—'farther off, Susan—this is tragedy, don't huddle together as they do in farce.'

'But I am in such trouble, Anne.'

'Of course you are—you are Tibulla—you are jealous. You spy all our looks, catch all our words. Now, mind your *business*. The stage is mine. I speak to my Tiberias.' She kicked her train adroitly out of the way, and flowed like a wave on a calm day towards Tiberias, who stood entranced, almost staggering under the weight of his own words, as they rolled over him:—

'"Obey the mandate of unfeeling Rome;
Make camps your hearth, the battlefield your home;
Fly vain delights, fight for a glorious name,
Forget that e'er we met, and live for Fame."'

(In this last line she began to falter a little.)

'"Alas! I whom lost kingdoms could not move
Am mistress of myself no more. I love!
I love you, yet we part;—my race proscribe,
My royal hand disdain this barbarous tribe.
This diadem, that all the nations prize,
Is an unholy thing in Roman eyes."'

She did not merely speak, she acted these lines. With what a world of dignity and pathos she said 'my royal hand disdain,' and in speaking of the 'Diadem,' she slowly raised both hands, one somewhat higher than the other, and pointed to her coronet, for one instant. The pose would have been invaluable to Sculptor or Painter.

'We are in the wrong,' began Nathan soothingly, for the Queen had slightly indicated him as one of 'the barbarous tribe.'—'A lady like you!—The Romans are fools-asses-dolts-and-beasts,' cried Nathan, running the four substantives into one.

'Hush! father!' cried the author reproachfully.

'"And you, young maid, kill not my wounded heart;
Ah! bid me not from my Tiberias part."'

(Tears seemed to choke her utterance.)

'Oh no! cousin,' drawled out Susan, 'sooner than you should die of grief—it *is* a blow, but I give him up—'

'Hold your tongue, Susan, you put me out.'

'Now it is too melting,' whined Nathan, 'leave off—there, do ye leave off,—it is too melting.'

'Isn't it?' said Alexander, radiant. 'Go on! go

on! You whose dry eye—you whose dry eye, Mrs. Oldfield.'

Mrs. Oldfield turned full on Nathan, and sinking her voice into a deeper key, she drove the following lines, slowly and surely through and through his poor, unresisting, buttery heart:—

'"You whose dry eye looks down on all our tears,
Pity yourself,—ah! for yourself have fears.
Alone upon the earth some bitter day,
You'll call your son your trembling steps to stay.
Old man! regret, remorse, will come too late;
In vain you'll pity then our sad, sad fate."

'But, my good sir, you don't bear me out by your dumb play,—you are to be the unrelenting sire.'

'Now, how ca-ca-ca-can I, when you make me blubber?' gulped out he 'whose dry eye,' &c.

'And me!' whined Susan.

'Aha!' cried Alexander, with a hilarious shout, 'I've made them cry with my verses!'

A smile, an arched smile wreathed the Tragic Queen's countenance.

Alexander caught it, and not being yet come to his full conceit, pulled himself up short: 'No,' cried he, 'no! it was you who conquered them with my weak weapon; you, whose face is spirit, and whose voice is music. Enchantress,'——

Here, Alexander, who was gracefully inclining towards the charmer, received a sudden push from the excited Nathan, and fell plump on his knees as intended.

'Speak again,' cried he, 'for you are my queen. I love you. What is to be my fate?'

'Alexander,' said Anne, fluttering as she had never fluttered before: 'you have so many titles to my esteem. Oh! no, that won't do. See, sir, he does it almost as well as I do.

'"Live, for I love you;
My life is his who saved that life from harm;
This pledge attests the valour of your arm. Here, look!"'

And she returned him his pocket-book.

'His pocket-book!' said Nathan, his eyes glazed with wonder. 'Why, how did his tragedy come in his pocket-book; I mean, his pocket-book in his tragedy; which is the true part, and which is the lie? Oh! dear, the dog has made his father cry, and now I have begun, I don't like to leave off somehow.' Then, before his several queries could be answered, he continued, 'So, this is Play Acting, and it's a sin! Well then—I like it.' And he dried his eyes, and cast a look of brilliant satisfaction on all the company.

He was then silent, but Alexander saw him the next minute making signals to him to put more fire and determination into his amorous proposals.

Before he could execute these instructions, a clock on the chimneypiece struck three.

The actress started, and literally bundled father and son out of the house, for in those days plays begun at five o'clock.

Mrs. Oldfield, however, invited them to sup with

her, conditionally; if she was not defeated in 'The Rival Queens.' 'If I am,' said she, 'it will be your interest to keep out of my way; for, of course, I shall attribute it to the interruptions and distractions of this morning.'

She said this with an arch, and, at the same time, rather wicked look, and Alexander's face burned in a moment.

'Oh,' cried he, 'I should be miserable for life.'

'Should you?' said Anne.

'You know I must.'

'Well, then,' (and a single gleam of lightning shot from her eyes) 'I must not be defeated.'

At five o'clock, the theatre was packed to the ceiling, and the curtain rose upon 'The Rival Queens,' about which play much nonsense has been talked. It is true, there is bombast in it, and one or two speeches that smack of Bedlam; but there is not more bombast than in other plays of the epoch, and there is ten times as much fire. The play has also some excellent turns of language and some great strokes of nature, in particular the representation of two different natures agitated to the utmost by the same passion, jealousy, is full of genius.

'The Rival Queens' is a play for the stage, not the closet. Its author was a great reader, and the actors who had the benefit of his reading charmed the public in all the parts, but in process of time actors arose who

had not that advantage, and 'Alexander the Great' became too much for them. They could not carry off his smoke, or burn with his fire. The female characters, however, retained their popularity for many years after the death of the author, and of Betterton, the first 'Alexander.' They are the two most equal female characters that exist in one tragedy. Slight preference is commonly given by actors to the part of 'Roxana,' but when Mrs. Bracegirdle selected that part, Mrs. Oldfield took 'Statira' with perfect complacency.

The theatre was full—the audience in an unusual state of excitement.

The early part of the first act received but little attention. At length Statira glided on the scene. She was greeted with considerable applause; in answer to which she did not duck and grin, according to rule, but sweeping a rapid, yet dignified curtsey, she barely indicated her acknowledgments, remaining Statira.

> ' "Give me a knife, a draught of poison, flames!
> Swell, heart! break, break, thou stubborn thing!" '

Her predecessors had always been violent in this scene. Mrs. Oldfield made distress its prominent sentiment. The critics thought her too quiet, but she stole upon the hearts of the audience, and enlisted their sympathy on her side before the close of the act.

Mrs. Bracegirdle, who stood at the wing during the scene, turned round to her toady, and said, shrugging her shoulders, 'Oh, if that is all the lady can do!'

In the third act Mrs. Bracegirdle made her *entrée* with great spirit, speaking, as she came on, the line—

'O, you have ruined me! I shall be mad!'

She was received with great applause, on which she instantly dropped Roxana, and became Mrs. B., all wreathed in smiles; the applause being ended, she returned to Roxana as quickly as it is possible to do after such a deviation. She played the scene with immense spirit and fire; and the applause was much greater than Statira had obtained in the first act.

Applause is the actor's test of success.

The two queens now came into collision, and their dialogue is so dramatic that I hope I may be excused for quoting it, with all its faults.

Roxana. Madam, I hope you will a queen forgive:
Roxana weeps to see Statira grieve;
How noble is the brave resolve you make,
To quit the world for Alexander's sake!
Vast is your mind, you dare thus greatly die,
And yield the king to one so mean as I;
'Tis a revenge will make the victor smart,
And much I fear your death will break his heart.

Statira. You counterfeit, I fear, and know too well
How much your eyes all beauties else excel;
Roxana, who though not a princess born,
In chains could make the mighty victor mourn.
Forgetting power when wine had made him warm,
And senseless, yet even then you knew to charm:
Preserve him by those arts that cannot fail,
While I the loss of what I love bewail.

Roxana. I hope your majesty will give me leave
To wait you to the grove, where you would grieve;
Where, like the turtle, you the loss will moan
Of that dear mate, and murmur all alone.

Statira. No, proud triumpher o'er my falling state,
Thou shalt not stay to fill me with my fate;

Go to the conquest which your wiles may boast,
And tell the world you left Statira lost.
Go seize my faithless Alexander's hand,
Both hand and heart were once at my command;
Grasp his lov'd neck, die on his fragrant breast,
Love him like me whose love can't be express'd,
He must be happy, and you more than blest:
While I in darkness hide me from the day,
That with my mind I may his form survey,
And think so long, till I think life away.

Roxana. No, sickly virtue, no,
Thou shalt not think, nor thy love's loss bemoan,
Nor shall past pleasures through thy fancy run·
That were to make thee blest as I can be;
But thy no-thought I must, I will decree;
As thus, I'll torture thee till thou art mad,
And then no thought to purpose can be had.

Statira. How frail, how cowardly is woman's mind!
We shriek at thunder, dread the rustling wind,
And glitt'ring swords the brightest eyes will blind;
Yet when strong jealousy inflames the soul,
The weak will roar, and calms to tempests roll.
Rival, take heed, and tempt me not too far;
My blood may boil, and blushes show a war.

Roxana. When you retire to your romantic cell,
I'll make thy solitary mansion hell!
Thou shalt not rest by day, nor sleep by night,
But Still, Roxana shall thy spirit fright;
Wanton in dreams if thou dar'st dream of bliss,
Thy roving ghost may think to steal a kiss;
But when to his sought bed thy wand'ring air
Shall for the happiness it wished repair,
How will it groan to find thy rival there?
How ghastly wilt thou look when thou shalt see,
Through the drawn curtains that great man and me,
Wearied with laughing joys that shot to the soul,
While thou shalt grinning stand, and gnash thy teeth, and howl!

Statira. O barb'rous rage! my tears I cannot keep,
But my full eyes in spite of me will weep.

Roxana. The king and I in various pictures drawn,
Clasping each other, shaded o'er with lawn,

Shall be the daily presents I will send,
To help thy sorrow to her journey's end;
And when we hear at last thy hour draws nigh,
My Alexander, my dear love, and I,
Will come and hasten on thy lingering fates,
And smile and kiss thy soul out through the grates.
Statira. 'Tis well, I thank thee; thou hast waked a rage,
Whose boiling now no temper can assuage;
I meet thy tides of jealousy with more,
Dare thee to duel, and dash thee o'er and o'er.
Roxana. What would you dare?
Statira. Whatever you dare do,
My warring thoughts the bloodiest tracks pursue;
I am by love a fury made, like you;
Kill or be killed, thus acted by despair.
Roxana. Sure the disdain'd Statira does not dare?
Statira. Yes, tow'ring proud Roxana, but I dare.
Roxana. I tow'r indeed o'er thee;
Like a fair wood, the shade of kings I stand,
While thou, sick weed, dost but infest the land.
Statira. No, like an ivy I will curl thee round,
Thy sapless trunk of all its pride confound,
Then dry and wither'd, bend thee to the ground.
What Sysigambis' threats, objected fears,
My sister's sighs, and Alexander's tears,
Could not effect, thy rival rage has done;
My soul, whose start at breach of oaths begun,
Shall to thy ruin violated run.
I'll see the king in spite of all I swore,
Tho' curs'd, that thou may'st never see him more.

In this female duel Statira appeared to great advantage. She exhibited the more feminine character of the two. The marked variety of sentiment she threw into each speech, contrasted favourably with the other's somewhat vixenish monotony; and every now and then she gave out volcanic flashes of great power, all the more effective for the artful reserve she had hitherto made of her physical resources. The effect was elec-

trical when she, the tender woman, suddenly wheeled upon her opponent with the words 'Rival, take heed,' etc. And now came the climax; now it was that Mrs. Bracegirdle paid for her temporary success. She had gone to the end of her tether long ago, but her antagonist had been working on the great principle of Art—Climax. She now put forth the strength she had economised; at each speech she rose and swelled higher, and higher, and higher. Her frame dilated, her voice thundered, her eyes lightened, and she swept the audience with her in the hurricane of her passion. There was a moment's dead silence, and then the whole theatre burst into acclamations, which were renewed again and again ere the play was suffered to proceed. At the close of the scene Statira had overwhelmed Roxana; and, as here she had electrified the audience, so in the concluding passage of the play she melted them to tears—the piteous anguish of her regret at being separated by death from her lover.

'What, must I lose my life, my lord, for ever?'

And then her pitying tenderness for his sorrow; and then her prayer to him to live; and, last, that exquisite touch of woman's love, more angelic than man's—

——— 'Spare Roxana's life;
'Twas love of you that caused her give me death;'

and her death with no thought but love, love, love upon her lips; all this was rendered so tenderly and so divinely, that no heart was untouched, and few eyes

were dry now in the crowded theatre. Statira died; the other figures remained upon the stage, but to the spectators the play was over; and when the curtain fell there was but one cry, 'Oldfield!' 'Oldfield!'

In those days people conceived opinions of their own in matters dramatic, and expressed them then and there. *Roma locuta est*, and Nance Oldfield walked into her dressing-room the queen of the English stage.

Two figures in the pit had watched this singular battle with thrilling interest. Alexander sympathised alternately with the actress and the queen. Nathan, after hanging his head most sheepishly for the first five minutes, yielded wholly to the illusion of the stage, and was 'transported out of this ignorant present' altogether; to him Roxana and Statira were *bonâ fide* queens, women, and rivals. The Oldworthys were seated in Critic's Row; and after a while Nathan's enthusiasm and excitement disturbed old gentlemen who came to judge two actresses, not to drink poetry all alive O.

His neighbours proposed to eject Nathan; the said Nathan on this gave them a catalogue of actions, any one of which, he said, would re-establish his constitutional rights and give him his remedy in the shape of damages: he wound up with letting them know he was an attorney-at-law. On this they abandoned the idea of meddling with him as hastily as boys drop the baked half-pence in a scramble provided by their

philanthropical seniors. So now Mrs. Oldfield was queen of the stage, and Alexander had access to her as her admirer, and Nathan had a long private talk with her, and then with some misgivings went down to Coventry.

A story ought to end with a marriage: ought it not? Well, this one does not, because there are reasons that compel the author to tell the truth. The poet did not marry the actress and beget tragedies and comedies. Love does not always end in marriage, even behind the scenes of a theatre. But it led to a result, the value of which my old readers know, and my young ones will learn—it led to a very tender and life-long friendship. And, oh! how few out of the great aggregate of love affairs lead to so high, or so good, or so affectionate a permanency as is a tender friendship.

One afternoon Mrs. Oldfield wrote rather a long letter thus addressed in the fashion of the day—

To Mr. Nathan Oldworthy,
Attorney-at-Law,
In the Town of Coventry,
At his house there in the Market street.
This, with all despatch.

Nathan read it, and said, 'God forgive me for thinking ill of any people because of their business,' and his eyes filled.

The letter described to Nathan an interview the actress had with Alexander. That interview (several months after our tale) was a long, and at some moments, a distressing one, especially to poor Alexander: but it had been long meditated, and was firmly carried out; in that interview this generous woman conferred one of the greatest benefactions on Alexander one human being can hope to confer on another. She persuaded a Dramatic Author to turn Attorney. He was very reluctant then; and very grateful afterwards. These two were never to one another as though all had never been. They were friends as long as they were on earth together. This was not so very long. Alexander lived to eighty-six; but the great Oldfield died at forty-seven. Whilst she lived, she always consulted her Alexander in all difficulties. One day she sent for him: and he came sadly to her bed-side; it was to make her will. He was sadder than she was. She died. She lay in state, like a Royal Queen; and noblemen and gentlemen vied to hold her pall as they took her to the home she had earned in Westminster Abbey. Alexander, faithful to the last, carried out all her last requests: and he tried, poor soul, to rescue her Fame from the cruel fate that awaits the great artists of the scene,—oblivion. He wrote her Epitaph. It is first-rate of its kind; and prime Latin for once in a way:—

Hic juxta requiescit
Tot inter Poetarum laudata nomina
ANNA OLDFIELD.
Nec ipsa minore laude digna.
Nunquam ingenium idem ad partes
diversissimas nobilius fuit:
Ita tamen ut ad singulas
non facta sed nata esse videretur.
In Tragœdiis
Formæ splendor, oris dignitas, incessûs majestas,
Tantâ vocis suavitate temperabantur
Ut nemo esset tam agrestis tam durus spectator
Quin in admirationem totus reperetur.
In Comœdia autem
Tanta vis, tam venusta hilaritas,
Tam curiosa felicitas,
Ut neque sufficerent spectando oculi,
Neque plaudendo manus.

There, brother, I have done what I can for your sweetheart, and I have reprinted your Epitaph after one hundred years.

But neither you nor I, nor all our pens, can fight against the laws that rule the Arts. Each of the great Arts fails in some thing, is unapproachably great in others. The great Artists of the Scene are paid in cash; they cannot draw bills at fifty years' date.

They are meteors that blaze in the world's eye—and vanish.

We are farthing candles that cast a gleam all around four yards square for hours and hours.

Alexander lived a life of business honest, honorable, and graceful, too; for the true poetic feeling is ineradicable—it colors a man's life—is not colored

by it. And when he had reached a great old age, it befell that Alexander's sight grew dim, and his spirit was weary of the great city, and his memory grew weak, and he forgot parchments, and dates, and reports, and he began to remember as though it was yesterday the pleasant fields, where he had played among the lambs and the butter-cups in the morning of his days. And the old man said calmly, 'Vixi! Therefore now I will go down, and see once more those pleasant fields; and I will sit in the sun a little while; and then I will lie beside my father in the old churchyard.' And he did so. It is near a hundred years ago now.

So Anne Oldfield sleeps in Westminster Abbey, near the poets whose thoughts took treble glory from her while she adorned the world: and Alexander Oldworthy lies humbly beneath the shadow of the great old lofty spire in the town of Coventry.

Requiescat in pace!

'And all Christian souls, I pray Heaven.'

THE END.

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